Sunday, December 28, 2008 • Vol. 24 / No. 28 philippine.inquirer.net

• BRANGELINA: Our kids bring us so much joy and peace, they make us feel like the most important persons in the world / ENTERTAINMENT D1 • HOW AN HEIRESS tries to make a difference / LIFESTYLE C1 • 12 MORE REASONS to smile, to keep reading, to watch in a crisis-pocked year / SUNDAY INQUIRER MAGAZINE

PHILIPPINE Sunday INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

NIGHT SKY SPECTACLE Iloilo City residents enjoy a 20-minute display of fireworks courtesy of Atrium Mall, which illuminate the Capitol building and grounds.

₱50-M drug bribe bared

Justice dep't drops raps vs 3 rich kids in buy-bust

By Tarra Quismundo and Dona Z. Pazzibugan

CHARMS FOR 2009 A woman arranges good-luck charms for the incoming Year of the Ox while waiting for customers at a general merchandise store on Oroquieta Street in Binondo, Manila.

THE PHILIPPINE DRUG ENforcement Agency (PDEA) smells something rotten in the justice department's dismissal of the charges filed against three "rich kids" arrested in buy-bust operations in September.

PDEA spokesperson Derrick Carreon told the Inquirer on Friday that the agency had received information that "₱50 million changed hands" for the release of Richard Ramos Rendez, Jorge Jordan Joseph and Joseph Ramirez Sisson, or the so-called "Alabang Boys" still being held at the agency's detention center in Quezon City.

Rendez, Joseph and Sisson were busted for carrying ecstasy, cocaine and marijuana on Sept. 20 in operations four hours apart in Ayala Alabang and the south gate of Araneta Center in Quezon City.

Some 60 tablets of ecstasy packets of marijuana and sachets of cocaine were found when the group was arrested in the pre-dawn operations, the PDEA said.

The charges filed by the agency in the Department of Justice (DOJ) were dismissed early this month for lack of probable cause.

The ruling stirred suspicion among

P50-M DRUG A4

Aklan boy gets gift of limbs

By Doris C. Dumlao

HE IS THE EPITOME OF SHEER determination.

Born without feet and one arm, Arnel Repinto used to travel 4 kilometers back and forth each day to go to school in a far-flung ville in Aklan, mostly on calloused knees.

Not anymore, after the 12-year-old boy got his best Christmas gift ever: The realization of a dream to stand tall, even on prosthetic legs, thanks to kind hearts and gentle people who made it all come true.

A few days after he got his artificial limbs, Arnel joined a prosthesis walkathon.

He also smiles a lot these days, unlike before, when he was always grumpy.

"Back in the province, he never wanted to miss his classes. What would he do otherwise but that, he says," said Susan Ropero, 50, of her fifth grade son who even taught himself to be a good swimmer in spite of his disability.

A devastating typhoon that killed hundreds in June ironically brought Arnel good fortune and changed his life forever.

Arnel's family lived beside a river in Sitio Pinungol, Bacyang, Malulug, in a house that was swept away in flood-

AKLAN A4

Reverse press con: Shoe's on other foot

By Vincent Cabreza
Inquirer Northern Luzon

BAGUIO CITY—IN THIS PRESS CONference, it's the reporters who could end up being "shoed."

The government launched here last week what it called a "reverse press con," in which public officials got a chance to pick the brains of journalists about what they know and how they felt about local issues.

The briefing, called "Shoe on the Other Foot," was designed by the Philippine Information Agency (PIA) supposedly to help news makers understand media perspectives. The pilot

REVERSE A6

US lawyer fights for maltreated Pinays

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

IT WAS LOVE THAT MOVED THIS American lawyer to fight for the rights of Filipino women traveling to Hong Kong.

In one of his letters to Philippine newspapers in October, Andrew Lee complained about the harrowing experience of his Filipino girlfriend who had flown to Hong Kong to meet him.

According to Lee, his 22-year-old girlfriend was strip-searched, interrogated and detained at the Hong Kong airport for 16 hours—not the first time such a thing had happened to a Filipina woman, he said.

"My girlfriend's rights were violated," said Lee, 46. "She and [three] other women were singled out because of their race."

Lee received a number of e-mails after his letters were published. From his fellow Americans whose Filipina wives or friends had suffered the same fate, he learned what the problem was: Hong Kong immigration authorities had become wary of Filipina women flying to the former Crown Colony, ostensibly because some of them ended up in the flesh trade.

But this information merely succeeded in angering him further. He said that while his girlfriend had lived a difficult life as an orphan, she main-

LEE LAWYER A4

6 RP kids win in Science Olympiad

By DJ Yap

IT'S STILL A LONG WAY AWAY FROM THE PHILIPpines' first Nobel Prize, but for these wide kids, it may well be a good first baby step.

Six students from Philippine Science High School (PSHS) won six medals at a prestigious science tournament in South Korea early this month, proving that Filipinos can go toe-to-toe with the best in Physics, Chemistry and Biology.

The seniors-and-juniors from the state-run PSHS brought home three silver and three bronze medals from the 5th International Junior Science Olympiad (IJSO) in Changwon City on Dec. 6-13.

First started in 2004, the Olympiad drew some 250 science wizards aged 15 or younger from more than 40 countries.

"I felt so proud. We never expected to do so well considering that we had less than a month to pre-

6 RP KIDS A4

THE FILIPINO medalists (from the top)—Tram Acuña, Gaia Publico, Benjo Rodriguez, William Tan, Ralph Ugalino and Cara Evangelista—hold up the Philippine flag with Dr. Helen Cainta, PSHS executive director.

PDI reporter bags Henry Ford Award

SHE "HERDED" A CONVOY OF FUEL-miser subcompact cars and semi head-to-head with the "cowboys" of comparative test drives. Still, this lady motoring journalist came out on top.

For her comprehensive two-part test drive series on budget-priced compact cars in the Philippines, Inquirer Motoring reporter Tessa R. Salazar won the 2008 Henry Ford Award for Best Automotive Test Drive/Best Automotive Event Story awarded on Dec. 5 at Tourtoro in Greenhills, San Juan.

The two-part series, "Give way to the 'Mini-y 4' convoy!" and "Pint-sized cars—in size and price—are in," published in Inquirer Motoring on July 20 and Aug. 6 pitted four budget-priced compacts (three were Chinese cars) against each other in a head-to-head fuel-efficiency run. A hybrid Toyota Prius served as the pace car.

The series bested four other finalists from car magazines and newspapers.

HENRY FORD A4

WEATHER FORECAST

Second FRONTPAGE

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EZ2 15 19 20 2

ANG LUZ-VIS-MIN 5 9 15 23 35 40

P37,295,980.20

GMA won't veto CARP 'reso'

She will likely let controversial measure lapse into law, says Palace

By TJ Burgonio

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO won't veto a joint congressional resolution extending the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) but will likely let it lapse into law, a Malacañang official said yesterday.

"I don't think the President will veto the joint resolution on the six-month extension of CARP considering, in particular, the overwhelming majority by which it was passed by both chambers of Congress," said Secretary Gabriel Claudio.

While it departed greatly from the resolution Ms Arroyo had certified as urgent, the version that was passed gives the Senate and House of Representatives six more months to craft a "final extension law," said Claudio, the presidential political adviser.

"Given those circumstances, it's likely the President will just let the joint resolution lapse into law," he said in a text message to the Inquirer.

Both chambers of Congress on Dec. 17 adopted Joint Resolution 19 extending CARP by six months from Dec. 31, but dropping its compulsory land acquisition and distribution provision, the "heart and soul" of the program, according to stakeholders.

President Arroyo had earlier certified as urgent a resolution extending CARP for six months in its original form, with all provisions intact.

Resolution 19 sparked an immediate uproar among farmers who charged it virtually amended the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law by making compulsory land acquisition and distribution an option instead of a mandate.

The farmers, members of Task Force Mapalad which supports silent rights, had threatened to petition the courts to declare the resolution unconstitutional.

"It's their right to question the extension or the conditions under which such extension was provided. We will respect and even defend the exercise of that right," said Claudio.

What's important now is the lawmakers have six more months to craft a final extension law that "embodies the spirit and purpose of land reform" based on a consensus among farmers' groups, he said.

In a memorandum to the President that he released to the press, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita noted the Resolution 19 was received by the Office of the President on Dec. 23, giving Ms Arroyo until Jan. 23 to sign it, veto it, or let it lapse into law.

The President has those options when it comes to legislative measures, a Palace official said.

Agrarian Reform Secretary Nasser Pangandaman confirmed Friday that he did recommend to the President that she not sign Resolution 19.

"I recommended that she not sign it because it had been amended; that's not the resolution that she certified," Pangandaman said on the phone. "I'm just being consistent with my position."

He said he had not received feedback from Ms Arroyo on his recommendation.

Pangandaman, however, denied reports surrounding in the President that she allow the resolution to lapse into law.

"That's inaccurate," he said.

What about funding

Should the President not sign the resolution, only CARP's funding, not the program, will expire on Dec. 31, according to Pangandaman.

"My legal team is studying that," he said, when asked what would happen if the resolution isn't signed by Ms Arroyo and funding expires at year-end.

In a Dec. 10 memorandum to the President, Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez had said that only its funding, not CARP, would expire at the end of the year. He said Congress should appropriate funds so as not to hamper the program's implementation.

Get back to CARP

In a related development, two militant groups have urged Speaker Prospero Nograles and their other congressional to restart an alternative land reform measure—House Bill 5859 or the Genuine Agrarian Reform Bill (GARB) authored by the late Anakpawis party-list Rep. Crispin Beltran.

In a joint statement, the Gabriela Maglocholuan ng Pilipinas (GMP) and Bukluran ng Manggagawang Kababaihan ng Pilipinas (Pambansang) said: "Since CARP has been served with an official death certificate courtesy of Joint Resolution No. 19, the Nograles leadership has no option but to let GARB or HB 5859 take center stage in the current agrarian reform debate."

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DAR chief, son tagged in attack on boy, father

By Beverly T. Mainsiad

PANGANDAMAN

THE SON OF AGRARIAN REform Secretary Nasser Pangandaman and several persons beat up a 14-year-old boy and his father at a golf course in Malipolo on Friday, the victims complained yesterday.

The alleged attackers were identified as Hanser Pangandaman Jr., mayor of Wasiz, Lanao del Sur, and his police companions and armed bodyguards. The victims, Delfin de la Paz and his family, said the Agrarian Reform secretary witnessed the incident at the Valley Golf Club but did not stop his son and their bodyguards from attacking the victims.

De la Paz filed the complaint immediately after the incident on Friday with the Malipolo police, who said the charges, including child abuse, would be filed on Monday.

Breach of etiquette

De la Paz said the incident started when the Pangandaman broke golf etiquette by playing out of turn and overtaking the De La Paz family at the fourth Course of the Valley Golf and Country Club.

In an interview, De la Paz, 36, said he and his two children—daughter Bambee, 16, and son Bino, 14—were playing golf and were on Hole No. 3 when two golf carts bearing the Pangandamans and their friends overtook them.

Aside from the Pangandamans, the group also included Hayal Abdulan, Mohammad Hussein, Abdin Pacasum, Boni Malipao and Ismal Amaro.

Dela Paz said he complained to the marshal and when the two groups caught up with each other at the tee boxes on hole No. 5, an altercation ensued.

De la Paz said that at the height of the altercation, Nasser Jr. suddenly smacked him and his son, punching and kicking them and shouting: "Hindi mo ba ako nakikilala? (Don't you know me?)"

Bambee de la Paz, who witnessed everything, said the younger Pangandaman counterand in attack even when his father was already on his knees pleading for him to stop.

Bambee, in a text email to friends, said they decided to stop playing and retreated to the clubhouse to seek medical attention, but their attackers followed them there. The case jeered by their bodyguards, the Pangandaman group again attacked father and son. Bambee said two of the suspect's bodyguards even pulled out their guns.

She said that while Secretary Pangandaman did not participate in the attacks, he did not lift a finger to stop his son and his companions from beating victims. None of the golf club's security guards and managers tried to stop the beating.

'Golfers are decent'

Dela Paz's 14-year-old boy suffered extreme facial, head and back injuries due to the blows he received.

"This is a golf course. I have been a golfer all my life and I have never seen anything like this," Bambee said. "And I though golfers were decent people. It's sad that politicians were decent people. I guess not."

Bambee and Bino de la Paz are both outstanding junior golfers. Bambee is on vacation from the University of Cincinnati where she is a golf scholar. Bino is one of the top golfers in his age group.

Efforts to reach Secretary Pangandaman for comment yesterday proved fruitless. His cell phone was off. The public information officer of the Department of Agrarian Reform promised to call the Inquirer as soon as he got in touch with the secretary but he had not done so at press time yesterday.

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PDI reporter bags award

Front page A1

On Aug. 31, Salazar also won a bronze trophy at the Toyota Driving Tomorrow Journalism Awards for her story on UPD-powered vehicles called, "Spiking fuel prices activate 'survival mode'" edited/ published in Inquirer.net following an Inquirer shooting on July 23.

Salazar pocketed P40,000 for the Henry Ford Awards and P20,000 for the Toyota Driving Tomorrow Journalism Awards. It was the first journalism competition initiated by Toyota Motor Philippines Corp. during its 20th anniversary celebrations.

The Henry Ford Awards (HFA), now on its eighth year, received 132 entries in 34 subcategories. The entries underwent a two-phase judging process.

Honest appraisal

In citing Salazar's winning piece, the HFA said, "The piece stood out as given an honest but fair treatment in this two-issue final debate readers a chance not just ride through a test drive of 4 pre-loved cars. What makes the article even more interesting is the comparison with a hybrid car's promise of fuel efficiency, the main selling driver of the said company."

"The writing is effortless and even conversational, adding to its consumer appeal. In one rush through the engaging prose, one feels as if one were riding with the writer—from one small car to another. The result? Information that is useful and decision-driving," the citation said.

"The article wins for its honest appraisal of the features and riding comfort of cars, comparing, allowing would-be consumers an important glimpse into how they might make the decision to consider ownership," it added.

HENRY FORD AWARDEE. TY Sarian (left), vice president for finance of Ford Group Philippines, and Leah Huang, group account director of Ogilvy Public Relations Worldwide-Manila, hand the Henry Ford Award (right) to Inquirer reporter Tess Salazar (right). CHONG TOLENTINO

Love female

Salazar, a consistent HFA winner since 2000, is the lone female journalist in this year's roster of winners. In 2001, she bagged three HFA journalism awards—the first gained (but in the awards' history, thereby earning her a slot in the 2000s Hall of Fame. This year's win is her sixth (4th).

This year, the HFA's biggest winner is James Ibrahim, El Magnifico editor in chief, PM editor MUHT) "Commonflow" buzz and four accurring columnist. He garnered three HFAs for his feature stories on the environment and motorsports as well as his piece on the new Ford Focus.

Other winners are Top Gear editor in chief Renson Sarne (two awards), Ben delos Reyes of Yano Review" (Channel 11), Ulysses Reg of www.pinoycars.com, El Magazine's Chris Van Hooven, Chronic Commercial News/ Alex Young, El Magazine's Mayo Bayot, and Philippine Gazette's Harold S. Cortez.

Business Mirror's motoring section was adjudged the best for the second year.

A new category was added this year for aspiring student journalists. Applied for, Cruz of College of Saint Benilde's The Benildean won for best environment-feature by a student.

Henry Ford Awards judges

The first-phase judges were Mario Montajano, director of the Energy Utilization and Management Bureau, Department of Energy; Jaime Bautista Flores, professor of the Department of Economics, Ateneo de Manila University; Antonio Ortenegrado, editor in chief of UST's The Varsitarian; Leah Huang, group account director of Ogilvy Public Relations Worldwide-Manila; Steven Tan, vice president for marketing and sales of Ford Group Philippines.

The second-phase judges were composed of Ford Group Philippines president Nick Bidin; Bert Sonning, assistant secretary of the Land Transportation Office; Augusto Lagman, president of the Automobile Association Philippines; professor Rachel Khan, chair of the Journalism Department, University of the Philippines Diliman; Pearly Pacquing, planning director of Ogilvy and Mather Philippines.

The HFA forms part of the commitment of the Ford Group Philippines to recognize journalists who have supported the automotive industry by providing consumers with accurate news reports and information. The program itself was recently awarded a Philippine Quill award for excellence by the International Association of Business Communicators. HFA is one of the automotive industry's most prestigious, longest-running and most competitive journalism awards.

Some of the judges of the Toyota Driving Tomorrow Journalism Awards were Dr. Jaime Ong, award-winning author and De La Salle professor; Chi Chi Robles, broadcast professor of both Ateneo de Manila University and UP Diliman; and David Celdran, director for corporate affairs, ABS-CBN Asian Channels and member of the board of directors of the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism.

NEW SMILING s/on. Arnel Rogero shows off his prosthetic legs. With him is his mother Susan. RYAN PAGO

Aklan boy gets gift

Front page A1

ing caused by typhoon "Frank."

The Rotary Club sent a relief mission to the area and learned of Arnel's plight.

Moya Lanas, president of the club's Kalibo chapter, e-mailed lawyer Ed Escudero, her counterpart in Pasay City, initially requesting for crutches for Arnel.

Seeing the pictures of Arnel, coupled with information that the youngster is a rice farmer's family of six, was very eager to go to school, Escudero was deeply moved.

"I requested Moya to provide me with the medical history and information on Arnel to determine if he was medically eligible to be a prosthesis leg recipient. Another Rotary Club had launched an artificial limb project and I was told Arnel could qualify to be a beneficiary," he said.

Crutches won't work

Escudero also thought that crutches wouldn't work for Arnel because he had no toe in the first place.

In November, Escudero flew to Kalibo to meet with Arnel and his mother and accompany them to Manila for rehabilitation.

"Upon meeting Arnel for the first time, I immediately noticed his being very quiet and withdrawn. Despite talking to him and trying to lift his spirit by telling him his dream would soon be a reality, he remained silent. Moya and Nancy Asuan told me that Arnel actually talks a lot," he said.

"I understand that his silence may have been brought about by his condition, a condition that made him feel inferior. This further challenged me to exert more effort in helping this boy. I believed that by facilitating the installation of his prosthetic legs, I may somehow restore that hope and confidence knowing that he can have a better chance of having a bright future."

Escudero brought Arnel and his mother to Manila's Philippine General Hospital (PGH) for diagnosis.

With the assistance of Dr. Carmelo Afiñe, PGH medical director, Arnel went through extensive tests, his neurosensory, psychological and physical rehabilitative therapy.

A small hiccup

"It seemed like in two weeks time, Arnel was going to have new legs and would be going back home to Malinao before Christmas," he said.

There was just a hiccup. PGH had run out of prosthetic legs, according to Dr. Percy Rivabar, chief of the PGH prosthetic department.

"That was truly a shocker!" he said.

Escudero told the good doctor he would "get those legs at any and all costs."

"I was not ready to put a young man's dream, much more that in his dreams," he said.

Escudero called up Alfred Li of Tzu Chi Foundation Philippines, which has been doing charity, disaster relief, medical missions, education, cultural and environmental work in the country for the past 14 years.

He told Li of the problem and forthwith he asked Aaron Lim of the foundation's Zamboanga office who is in charge of the Tzu Chi Green Love Jaipur Prosthetic Center to send prosthetic limbs for Arnel.

Meanwhile, I called Dr. Penny Limor and had worked with Aaron on previous occasions," he said.

Wish came true

But while one Jaipur foot suited Arnel's right leg, his doctor found that his left and shorter leg would not use the same technology because it would not have enough support.

Rivabar suggested that a joint for the Jaipur on Arnel's left leg. Without any hesitation, Escudero asked the doctor to proceed with the remedy or whatever it is.

A week ago, Arnel finally got his wish.

"He insists after he strapped his new pair of legs, he tried running up and dashed his walk around the door of the ward, impressing upon me the skills he learned over the past few days. I was awed. He continued to walk up onto the hallway, mostly unassisted, as if he was showing off to his fellow patients," Escudero said.

"I know Arnel's plans was clearly a sign of acknowledgment and gratefulness for having been given the chance to walk, Nancy Asuan, the overlowing and supportive mother stood by Arnel. I jokingly told Arnel that by the time he gets back to Aklan, he will have a girlfriend waiting, to which he responded with a big smile," he said.

Arnel still needs to undergo a few sessions of rehabilitative therapy to train him with his new limbs.

"I am confident, however, that the difficult training and adjustments Arnel will go through will be no match to his joy of finally realizing a dream long awaited, a dream to finally stand up and walk alongside with other people. Truly, a dream fulfilled," Escudero said.

3rd Marites Allen "168 Feng Shui Ways to WIN Promo"

7 Pinoy welders begging for food in Qatar

By Chris V Pangalinan
Inquirer Mindanao

DOHA, QATAR—WHILE THEIR countrymen closed on lavish Christmas meals, seven Filipino welders, who recently lost their jobs, begged for food at the Corniche and Fish Market here in order to have something to eat.

They are among the 23 foreign workers who were laid off when the construction company they were working for closed shop about four months ago.

Instead of going home, they decided to stay and fight for their salaries equivalent to four months which the company failed to give them. Their case is being heard by a local labor court.

But with Christmas and New Year's Eve coming, Filipino welders, who said that in order to survive, they had to beg for money and even food from compatriots who pass by Corniche, an area which is like Roxas Boulevard, Manila.

"Whenever we see adults at least 50 Qatari riyals (P650) or 100 Qatari riyals from our kababayan (countrymen) we run to the supermarket and buy rice," Cardan said.

He said aside from asking money from kind-hearted individuals, they also scavenge for shrimp heads at the Fish Market here before others throw them away.

No power

Cardan said they would share the food they get from begging and scavenging in their cramped makeshift quarters in Wakra, where all seven of them live.

They do not have electricity but they are able to fetch water from a nearby mosque courtesy of compassionate worshippers.

Another welder, Joselito Mahilac, said it has been four months since they last sent money to their families back home.

The sad plight of the seven welders has caught the attention of Filipinos here.

Already, an online community of Filipino expatriates living in Qatar started a fund-raising drive for them.

In contrast, Cardan said an official of the Philippine Overseas Labor Office (POLO) here allegedly failed to help when they asked for an Arabic interpreter to assist them in their labor case.

The official, identified as Steven Cruz, allegedly told Cardan: "I don't care if you win the case or not, what is important is that I can work for your immediate deportation."

Migrante International said Cruz's attitude contradicted President Macapagal-Arroyo's assurances that overseas Filipino workers can go to the POLO if they have problems. The president gave this assurance during a dinner with Filipino community leaders at the Doha Sheraton hotel here.

"Sir (Cruz) is being paid with taxpayers' hard-earned money and this is what he does in return? He should not be in that position," said Jhun de Jesus, Migrante's coordinator here.

Vivo Vidal, POLO chief here, said they would have to wait for the final decision of the labor court before they can extend assistance to the displaced Filipino workers.

"Ours there is a decision in favor of the workers, that's the time we can take action, "Vidal said.

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THE DAILY GOSPEL

Sunday, December 28, 2008
Holy Family

1st Reading: Gen 15:1-6; 21:1-3

After this the word of Yahweh was spoken to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward will be very great."

Abram said, "My Lord Yahweh, what use are your promises? I am still childless and all I have will go to Eliezer of Damascus. You have given me no children, so a slave will be my heir."

Then the word of Yahweh was spoken to him again, "Eliezer will not be your heir, but a child born of you (your own flesh and blood) will be your heir." Then Yahweh brought him outside and said to him, "Look up at the sky and count the stars if you can. Your descendants will be like that."

Abram believed Yahweh who, because of this, held him to be an upright man.

Yahweh was kind to Sarah as he had said, and Yahweh did to Sarah what he had promised: Sarah did have a son in Abraham in his old age, at the very time Yahweh had promised. Abraham gave the name Isaac to the son that Sarah bore him.

2nd Reading: Heb 11:8, 11-12, 17-19

It was by faith that Abraham, called by God, set out for a country that would be given to him as an inheritance; he set journey without knowing where he was going.

By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive a child, in spite of her advanced age, since she believed that he who had made the promise would be faithful. Therefore from an almost impotent man were born descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky, as many as the grains of sand on the seashore.

By faith Abraham went to offer Isaac when God tested him. And he who had received the promises of God offered up his only son although God had told him: Isaac's descendants will bear your name. Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and he received Isaac back as a symbol.

Gospel: Lk 2:22-40

When the day came for the purification according to the law of Moses, they brought the boy up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, as it is written in the law of the Lord: Every firstborn male shall be consecrated to God. And they offered a sacrifice according to the law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.

Now there lived in Jerusalem at this time a very upright and devout man named Simeon. The Holy Spirit was in him. He looked forward to the time when the Lord would comfort Israel, and the Lord had assured by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before seeing the Messiah of the Lord. So he was led into the Temple by the Holy Spirit at the time the parents brought the child Jesus to do for him according to the custom of the Law.

Simeon took the child in his arms and blessed God, saying,

"Now, O Lord, you can dismiss
your servant in peace,
for you have fulfilled your word
and my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you display for all the people to see:
a light to lighten the nations
and the glory of your people Israel."

His father and mother wondered at what was said about the child. Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother, "See then, he will be the ruin and the rising of many in Israel, a sign that shall not escape contradiction, while a sword will pierce your own soul. Then the secret thoughts of many may be brought to light."

There was also a prophetess named Anna, daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. All on leaving her father's house, she had been seven years with her husband, and then (by) she had been continually about the Temple, serving God on a strict night and day in fasting and prayer. She now stepped forward at that very time, giving thanks to God and spoke of the child to all who looked for relief in the deliverance of Jerusalem.

When the parents had fulfilled all that was required by the law of the Lord, they returned to their town, Nazareth in Galilee. There the child grew in stature and strength and was filled with wisdom; the grace of God was upon him.

Commentary:

Joseph and his blessed Mother took the child Jesus up to Jerusalem where they offered the traditional thanksgiving sacrifice. They expressed profound gratitude to the God who had blessed them so abundantly, all the while failing to their sense the very God to whom their prayers were addressed.

The Word becomes flesh and dwells among us so that we might live while with Him for all eternity. Our God does not keep His distance from us but becomes our brother, all so that we might experience what it means to be restored members of the family of God.

What will we accomplish for the next generation? Just ask the three generations.

P50-M drug bribe denounced

From page A1

antinarcotics agents who were candidates of the evildoers against Reuben, Joseph and Teresa.

But Chief State Prosecutor Jovencito Zuño firmly denied that he and the prosecutors who investigated and reviewed the case had been bribed or recommended the dismissal of the charges.

"It's not true. That's a big lie. They're just speculating," he said when reached on the phone in connection with the PDEA accusations that P50 million had changed hands to subvert the "Mabuhay Boys."

"The case was decided on the merits," Zuño stressed. "Hindi natuwa ang PDEA sa libro. Ako ma-sisi, malagot ka! Lapse sa DOJ! Di'n nor was that there was a P50-million bribe. You know me... I've been in the DOJ for so long."

Reliable info

Carmen said the justice department dismissed the charges against the three young men in a resolution issued on Dec. 2. The PDEA received a copy on Dec. 19, seven days after the agency promised evidence "to establish the fact of sale."

According to Carmen, PDEA Director General Dionisio Santiago "received reliable information ... that parties close to the three rich kids are working to secure their release earlier from the DOJ."

"There were instructions that money has changed hands, and that even [Santiago] received parts of the alleged P50-million bribe," Carmen said.

"They were confident that they will spend Christmas in their homes. But we still held them ... There's an automatic review of the resolution, and they will stay in jail," he said.

SANTIAGO

TUÑO

Alleged bribers

Santiago himself talked about the matter in an interview over ABS-CBN's morning show "Umagang Kay Ganda" on Friday.

Asked if some state lawyers could have been paid for the leniency, Santiago said: "I think so." But he admitted that the PDEA had no evidence to prove the purported bribery.

In a statement issued after his TV appearance, Santiago said: "The funny thing [is], upon [a] request relying register [the] make arrest after arrest, and then they make it into a business)."

He said his agency would succeed in prosecuting the three young men during the reinstituency DOJ review. "We will submit all legal remedies. This time, we will no longer take things sitting down," he said.

The PDEA said Justice Secretary Hernando Perez had ordered an inquiry into the purported bribe.

Back in October, the agency also reported receiving information that relatives of one of the "Mabuhay Boys" had offered P25 million for his release. It declined to say on whose behalf the offer was made.

'Extremely cautious'

But the justice department did not find probable cause to recommend the trial of Reuben, Joseph and Teresa.

Zuño said that before a resolution like his final review, the case was investigated by a state prosecutor, and the findings were reviewed by six other state prosecutors—first by Philip Quiroga and then by Mildred Ladaga.

He described Quiroga and Ladaga as "extremely cautious" in checking facts before making a recommendation.

Asked if he had heard of suspicious goings-on when the justice department was handling the case, Zuño replied in the negative.

He said the lawyer of the three young men had made no overtures to talk to him when the case reached his office for S.

Reinvestigation

Zuño said he explained his role to Justice Secretary Gonzalez when the latter asked about the case.

Nevertheless, he said, Gonzalez decided to order a reinvestigation.

"It's OK with me," Zuño said. "He can assign it to another state prosecutor. I volunteer it. And I reasonably inhibit myself."

Reuben, Joseph and Teresa no longer have in his detained while the reinvestigation is going on, according to Zuño.

He said an arrest warrant would be issued should the new panel of prosecutors find probable cause to recommend trial.

US lawyer fights for maltreated Pinays

From page A1

agard to complete a college degree (during) hard work and was definitely not a prostitute.

(The woman refused a request for an interview and asked that she not be named to protect her privacy.)

'Gov't should complain'

One of Lee's letters, which the Inquirer published in October, likewise drew the attention of Hannah Chua, a well-traveled businesswoman who heads the volunteer group Tulay Pinoy-Asia. (The foundation also promotes the welfare of overseas Filipino workers.)

On the phone with the Inquirer early this month, Chua expressed concern about reports that many Filipino women were being detained at the Hong Kong airport and harshly sent back.

She said the Department of Foreign Affairs "should do something to protect our people," and that the government "should complain."

Chua himself had done something. He sent a letter of protest to the Hong Kong Immigration Department.

He enclosed the Inquirer a copy of the department's reply to his letter, translated from Chinese to English, where it admitted to have refused entry to Lee's girlfriend but maintained that her rights were respected when she was detained.

Friendly people

In e-mail interviews with the Inquirer, Lee made it clear that he had nothing against the people of Hong Kong.

"I thought it was a beautiful city and location, and most of the people I met while I was there were very friendly," he said. "It is only the Hong Kong immigration agents that abused my girlfriend that I have a problem with."

According to Lee, officials of airlines flying between Manila and Hong Kong are aware of what is happening.

"The airlines are not the abusers, but they have knowledge of the abuse so they should have a duty to let the Philippine government know that this is going on," he said, adding:

"The airlines need to be questioned, too."

LEE

Waiting for hours

Per Lee's account, he and his girlfriend met online more than a year ago. Because he was scheduled to fly to Hong Kong for a job, they agreed to meet there in October.

She was excited. She wanted to go to Disneyland.

"I regret having her meet me in Hong Kong," Lee said. "I really feel responsible, and I feel bad that I wasn't able to protect her."

His flight from the United States was delayed for three hours because of a storm, and when he arrived at the Hong Kong airport, he could not find her.

"I was there waiting for her for hours; sometimes she was being questioned," he said. "The female guards agents were bothered to find me even though I was in the baggage area for hours."

Some Chinese airline agents later told him: "Is she traveling from the Philippines? She was probably detained by immigration."

Finally a young officer politely told him that she had been denied entry and would be sent back.

The couple subsequently met in Manila. And Lee became fascinated to learn of the ordeal his girlfriend had gone through.

Incommunicado

In his letter to Chua, which the latter also forwarded to the Inquirer, Lee said his girlfriend was "subjected (but the appropriately 16 hours."

"She was not allowed to contact anyone, nor the Philippine Embassy, nor friends or family. Her phone was taken from her," he said. "She tried to use a hamburger that she had previously purchased at the airport and that one man taken from her."

But she was "determined not to cry while she was being roughhandled by female immigration agents," Lee said.

"She did her best to be brave and not show them any emotion, but she told me that inside she wanted to die," he said. "She felt that her dignity had been taken away from her."

In its reply to Chua, the Hong Kong immigration department said that before an officer made the decision to disallow entry to Lee's girlfriend, "our staff tried to contact the traveler's friend [or get] more information, but the traveler failed to offer her friend's contact information."

The department also said it requested her rights, including "asking the telephone to contact the consul, lawyer or relatives" and "[having] a meal or drinking water."

Racism

Three other Filipino women were detained, interrogated and sent packing that day, Lee said, including his girlfriend. No women from other countries were subjected to the same treatment.

"I write this letter to let the Filipino people know of the racism and abuse being done by immigration agents at the Hong Kong International Airport to Filipino citizens," Lee said in his letter published in the Inquirer.

In his letters to Chua, he said: "Filipinos should be outraged."

Lee called on the Philippine government to do something to protect its female citizens.

He said he was grateful that people like Chua and others who had sent him letters were showing concern not only for his girlfriend but also for other Filipino women who experienced the same ordeal.

6 RP kids win in Science Olympiad

From page A1

pare," said Benjamin Francis Rodriguez Jr., a junior who had the highest marks among the Philippine delegates.

"It just goes to show that Filipinos can compete with other countries' in the natural sciences, Rodriguez told the Inquirer.

Jan Tiberian Acuña and William Tan, both seniors, also won silver medals, while the bronze medalists were Cris Polillen, Cass Evangelista and Ralph Ugalino.

Acuña said the examination proper had three parts: A 30-item multiple choice, a theoretical exam with three questions, one each for physics, chemistry and biology, and group experiments on each subject.

"Before the exam, we were always in a huddle, reviewing and asking each other questions that may be asked in the exam," he said.

"On the whole, the exams, including us, were more reserved and aloof. The Europeans were the party people types," Acuña said.

Cramming sessions

He said the group fell a bit disadvantaged upon learning that some of the other nationalities, especially the Taiwanese, spent several months preparing for the competition, some of them "cramming" sessions.

"We didn't have much time to prepare for the contest due to school activities and lessons but while are over there we studied every night before the contest proper," Tan said.

He said winning silver was "quite unexpected."

Helen Cainta, the PSHS executive director who accompanied the students, said: "This is a proud moment for all PSHS ians. Once again, we have shown what Filipinos are made of."

Acuña said winning a silver medal means that a competitor fell within the top 20 percent of the contestant pool and a bronze within the top 20 percent. A gold medalist, on the other hand, must among the top 10 percent.

4 points away from gold

Only Russia and Taiwan won gold medals for each of their six delegates, according to a Taiwanese news website. Thailand, like the Philippines, won six medals—two golds and four silvers, a Thai news website reported.

Acuña said the Philippines "almost got a gold," with Philippines and Iran just six points away from the cutoff. He added that Singapore was ahead of him by 0.3 point.

He said the test questions tended to favor the host countries, which typically patterned the exams according to their own curriculums.

"It appeared that the questions were to prevent competitions, was biased in favor of the hosting countries," Acuña said.

For instance, Indonesia won top honors in the two years it hosted the event, as did Taiwan and Russia.

According to the IJSO website, the Philippines won only two silvers and a bronze in the previous Olympiad.

Rodriguez said this year's competition made him realize that Filipinos can compete with other nationals in science and mathematics despite the dismal state of education here.

"It can really be done," said the 23-year-old, who intends to take up medicine at the University of the Philippines when he graduates next year.

Doing well in competitions

Tan said the Philippines had actually been doing well in scholastic competitions.

"Even in the public schools, the contributors in the Philippines is advanced compared to other countries, while among ordinary schools, we are not lagging behind other countries in terms of what they are studying," he said.

Tan said he drew this conclusion after the competition proper. "The other delegates asked us how we dealt with the exam. Through that we were able to see what they knew and what they didn't," he said.

But Acuña thought differently. He said developing nations, we can compete. But with advanced countries like China, I think we're one or two years behind."

Acuña and Tan said they wanted to pursue a degree in physics from the University of the Philippines. Both said they would also mind doing so from less creative jobs that might await them when they graduated school.

"Physics is really my passion ... In my spare time, I try to solve complicated physics problems," Acuña said. "My friends find it weird."

Meager funding

But he said many other Filipino students wanting to specialize in the natural sciences lacked incentive to do so because of little government support and meager funding.

Rodriguez said there were usually many good Filipino scientists, but excellent science research required proper facilities, like laboratories.

While hogged the question: Is a Filipino winning a Nobel Prize for medicine, physics or chemistry an impossible dream at this point?

Acuña replied: "It's not impossible but it's going to be very tough ... We still have a long way to go before we can reach that with the developed countries."

Added Tan: "I'm not saying it's impossible to win a Nobel Prize with the way things are going, but it is going to be difficult."

But Rodriguez was far more optimistic: "I really think we can make it. All it's going to take is support from government and a lot of hard work."

Reverse press con: Shoe's on other foot

From page A1

forum cackled Cordillera autonomy.

If it works out well here, the project could be replicated in other areas to help address any misunderstanding between reporters and the officials they cover, said PIA Cordillera director Belen Tibalid.

Last week's forum participants, however, would not help but wonder—and have a few laughs—about the project's title. Was it inspired by shoe-throwing incident involving Gil Puyat during George W. Bush's visit?

No, Tibalid said, the PIA had already come up with the name a month before an Iraqi journalist threw his shoes in anger at the outgoing American president during a press conference in Baghdad.

"We suggested nothing by it," the official explained.

Shoe targets

It was Inquirer correspondent Delmar Cariño, president of the Benguet Press Corps, who suggested the "Shoe" topic. Thankfully said.

Still, several newsmen were heard cracking jokes on the subdomes of how several forum, warning that journalists were now in danger of being targeted by government "shoes" at this reverse press conference.

Lone agency directors of various government offices were made to answer to the wits of newsmen and given quotations in a panel representing the different media organizations in the Cordillera.

"I would want these (reverse press conferences) to be conducted more often and on a national scale to keep the newsmen on their toes for the perfect truth open," said Jane Ngalob, Cordillera director of the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda).

Ngalob is also acting chair of the Regional Development Council, which helped design the capsule newsmen forum.

Information gaps

He said the activity would help explain why "gaps" in information dissemination occur, not just concentrating Cordillera officials but government officials in general.

Ngalob said on October 2007 regional survey revealed that 1,536—or 60 percent—of the 2,800 respondents still could not grasp the concept of Cordillera autonomy.

He said 23 percent (598) resisted themselves as having been exposed to disinformation or misinformation during the autonomy campaign in early 1998.

To address these information gaps between officials and the media, Cordillera first agencies in the early 1990s began holding joint news conferences monthly.

The broad PIA holds the "Kapihan with Cors" weekly briefings conducted by the Cordillera Association of Regional Executives (CARE).

Fear of the press

Ngalob observed that the weekly meetings have established good rapport between journalists and officials, but that this has yet to translate into an open exchange of information where officials start dealing with individual reporters.

Ngalob said the first reverse press conference revealed the "fears" government officials have about journalists.

"Many have had unfavorable engagements with the media," he noted.

"They feel they are being attacked ... or are being manipulated to issue information that, in their perspectives, might be taken out of context and put them in hot water," he said.

Ngalob said the CARE had been encouraging officials of government agencies to discuss programs directly with reporters, rather than only use information officers who may not be trained to translate government reports into materials accessible to a layman.

"Transparency is one principle (by which) government has) to abide. I observed that we need to be more open," he said.

On the sidelines of the press conference, local journalist Merith Hanon said he had long wanted to do a story with from the perspective of local politicians and explaining their withdrawing-with-expenses, especially their fears and apprehensions.

Nothing wrong with text promo exclusions—NTC

Zambo air traffic controllers suspended

FIVE AIR TRAFFIC CONtrollers at the Zamboanga City airport's tube were late or absent. For as much the day when Christmas, leaving planes to stay in the air because they could not land, have been suspended, civil aviation officials said Saturday.

A Philippine Airlines jet from Manila with 156 passengers arrived shortly before noon at the airport but was forced to circle for nearly 30 minutes before it could land, Ramon Aldana, PAL Zamboanga manager, told The Associated Press.

A number Cebu Pacific airline's pilot service from Cebu City also arrived minutes ahead of the PAL flight was forced to land on its own, said Zamboanga airport manager Cebu Rizalina.

Rajabino said the tower was not manned for 40 minutes.

The Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines (Caap) said it had suspended the five and ordered an investigation into the incident. These found liable could face administrative sanctions, it said.

It was unclear if they would also face criminal charges.

Rajabino said two of the controllers were absent without notice on Friday, two came in late, and one had filed a leave approved by her supervisor, but the notice did not reach the airport administration office.

The newly air controllers explained they had difficulty getting a ride to work because public transportation was scarce the day after Christmas.

'Lesson for us'

But Rajabino said they were apparently still to holiday mode.

"They got their bonus before Dec. 24 and it was possible they were enjoying Christmas with their families," he said.

Caap Deputy Director for Operations Daniel Dimagiba said the agency would investigate the controllers for not being in their work stations 15 to 20 minutes before the start of their 6 a.m. shift to required.

"It was a lesson for us. It's the first time in our history that so people were on duty. It was a good thing there were no scheduled incidents," Dimagiba said in a telephone interview.

Admitting "haste" on the part of airport personnel, Dimagiba apologized to the stranded passengers who became worried when their planes were forced to hover above the city hungry thin road.

"There is no ability, it was out of responsibility," said Dimagiba.

As for the errant air traffic controllers, he said, "They could be replaced. It will depend on their administrative penalties, according to civil service rules."

Dimagiba said Caap officials will meet with Zamboanga airport personnel in the first week of January to come up with measures to prevent a repeat of the incidents. AP with a report from Ayla Ilic L. Aliño

SC junks bid to bar local execs from show biz

THE SUPREME COURT HAS DISmissed a petitioner's petition seeking to bar local government officials who are also to share his fees promoting their themselves.

In a unanimous decision, the high tribunal en banc said the United Andoy Transport's (UAT) petition for declaratory relief was an inappropriate remedy for seeking the enforcement of Section 90 of the Local Government Code and prevent those like personalities in office from profiting their original positions.

Section 90 requires all governors, city and municipal mayors from practicing any other profession or occupation other than the one to which they were elected.

The respondents in the petition for GR No. 180051 included Jose Lina, in his capacity as the then Interior and Local Government secretary, and then Commission on Elections (Comelec) Chairman Benjamin Abalos Sr. and Commissioners Rene Sarmiento, Florentino Tuason Jr., Resurreccion Borra, Ferdinand Rueda, Romeo Brawner, Nicodemo Ferrer, Manuel Barcelona Jr., Rufino Javier and Romeo Calida.

The UAT also named then Pasay City Mayor Wenceslao Trinidad, Pasig City Mayor Vicente Eusebio, Parañaque City Mayor Jose Joey Marquez and then Pampanga Gov. Lito Lapid.

The SC-3rd argued that "dual appointment of incumbent mayors and governors who are actors in movies and television programs enhances their income but reduces the considerable time that they should be devoting to their constituents."

It said that this was a violation of Section 90 of the Local Government Code, or Republic Act No. 7160, as well as the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees.

The SC also stressed the officials' "appearances in movies and television give them undue advantage in decisions over their opponents who were not actors."

The Manila Regional Trial Court in 2003 dismissed the UAT petition but the party appealed to the Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court found the trial court's dismissal of the petition for declaratory relief to have been proper.

Norman Bordadora

By Riza T. Olchondra

THE NATIONAL TELECOMMUNICAtions Commission (NTC) sees nothing wrong with excluding peak holiday periods from cell and text messaging promos, the regulator's top official said yesterday.

In a phone interview, NTC Commissioner Ruel Canobas said complaints about two telcos' promos' coverage, or lack thereof, may have resulted from a "misunderstanding" of the details.

He said the dates covered by the promos of Smart Communications Inc. and Globe Telecom Inc. were specified in their mechanics which were published in early December.

"There was an announcement of the suspension of the promos. There may have been a misunderstanding about the promo dates, which did not include December 23 to 25 and December 31 to January 1," Canobas said.

He told the NTC stood by its decision allowing the exclusion of certain dates from the Smart and Globe promos.

Network congestion

The NTC reportedly approved last week the request of both Globe and Smart to be allowed to exclude the periods of Dec. 23-25 and Dec. 30-Jan. 1 from promos that offered unlimited calls and text messages from 11 p.m. to 6 a.m. daily.

"We were aware of the telcos' concerns about network congestion. Commission. Even traffic traditionally peak during these dates and if they were included in the promos, what was supposed to benefit many customers may have disrupted services for all, including those who did not avail of the promos," Canobas said.

He said he was willing to clarify the rules concerning telecom promos should he be called upon to do so by Congress.

Spelled out in promos

Speaker Prospero Nograles had earlier said officials of the NTC and the giant telcos would be summoned in January on a House investigation into the exclusion of these days in the promo packages.

He assailed the mobile phone service providers for "robbing our people at this time of economic misery."

But in separate interviews Friday, Smart and Globe said they did not suspend any part of their promos.

Smart public affairs chief Ramon Isberto said the company's "P1.99 text plus unlimited" promo from 11 p.m. to 6 a.m. daily was "never due for implementation" on Dec. 23-25 and Dec. 30-Jan 1, "as the mechanics of our approved application will show."

High traffic

"Our reason was to avoid adding to an already high traffic period. It would have done more harm than good if we offered a promo that could not be enjoyed by subscribers during a high-volume period, especially at night. But all other promos due for implementation at the time are not suspended. For example, there is 40 Text 30," Isberto said.

Globe regulatory affairs chief Gerry Gonzalez Ildefonso said the company's "Unli Pld" promo was not for implementation on those dates.

Said Gonzalez: "When we applied for the promo, it was noted that the Christmas and New Year periods were not covered. But of the reason is that text and call traffic is already very heavy during these periods."

Atty. Jesus Regidor, chief of the enforcement group Rebecca Pura on Mindanao, the analysis, criticized the NTC's and telcos' actions as anti-consumer.

No excuse

"Possible network congestion is not an excuse for excluding the holidays from promos which help alleviate the economic burden on consumers. But promos are chosen. They should sustain network efficiency. They should improve their networks," Regidor said.

He said that, on the contrary, consumers should be given the option to enjoy these promos and activities, especially during periods of increased use of communications services like Christmas and New Year's.

"It is the responsibility of companies who profit from communications activities to make sure they have the capacity to provide the services," he said.

"And the government should make sure that they do this," he added.

Maynilad

MAYNILAD DETAILS ITS CAPITAL EXPENDITURES (CAPEX) BUDGET

CAPEX RATIONALE

To meet its Service Obligations under the Concession Agreement, Maynilad Water Services, Inc. (Maynilad) submitted to the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) its Business Plan and the corresponding Capital Expenditures Budget. Maynilad's Service Obligations include the following components: service coverage, hours of supply, water pressure, quality, and sewerage and sanitation.

At the end of 2007, the West Zone concession had a 74% water service coverage. Maynilad is committed to increasing this to 85.5% by 2009, 92.5% by 2010 and 98.5% by 2011. The 13.5% increase from 2007 to 2011 translates to a total of 2,134,000 new water service connections. And by 2013, all served areas will have 24-hour service with minimum of 7 pounds per square inch (psi) water pressure and water that passed the Philippine standard for drinking water quality.

Maynilad will also continue to upgrade its sewerage and sanitation service coverage under the Business Plan. Combining Maynilad's sewerage and sanitation services will cover 40.6% of the concession area by 2013.

To meet these service obligations, Maynilad will invest in capital projects, operating expenditures, and concession fees amounting to Php108.4B, until the end of the concession period in Year 25/26. For the immediate period of 2008 -2012, Maynilad will spend Php36.6 B in capital projects as detailed in the presented table.

KEY COMPONENTS OF THE MAYNILAD CAPEX PROGRAM

The Maynilad capex program was developed to meet the company's service obligations and achieve sustainable growth. The program's strategic goals include the following:

1. To improve network operational efficiency and reduce non-revenue water (water lost) from 63% to below 40% by 2012;
2. To expand water service to the South (Paranaque, Las Pinas, Muntinlupa and portions of Cavite which are covered by the West Zone Concession) and ensure adequate supply of potable water;
3. To upgrade customer services and improve the response time to customer complaints;
4. To upgrade sewerage and sanitation services, and comply with environmental standards.

A major component of our capex program is IE or the Recovery, Re-allocation and Re-selling of lost water. Under the Recovery program, Maynilad will establish District Metering Areas (DMA) to isolate non-revenue water leaks/ lost across the network. This project will significantly reduce physical losses in the system and segregate the whole network into smaller, more manageable hydraulic areas. Re-allocation entails establishing a more rational and efficient water network that will enable Maynilad to bring water to where it is needed. Re-selling entails the pipelaying of new distribution networks in unserved and underserved areas. This will result in 24-hour water coverage, with minimum 7 psi service to Maynilad customers.

Continuous improvement of operational efficiency and service levels is also a significant component of the Maynilad capex program. Pump stations and reservoirs will be constructed and upgraded to ensure good service levels in the concession area.

In the South, Maynilad will put up a 100 million liters per day (mld) modern water treatment plant by 2012, to augment the surface water coming from Angat Dam in Bulacan. This treatment plant, located in Putatan, Muntinlupa, will utilize the integrated membrane system and reverse osmosis process.

CAPEX PROGRAM FOR (2008 - 2012)

The presented table shows the key components of the capex program. The breakdown of each component as to location, length, size of pipes, sizes of meters, etc. has also been submitted to MWSS, and reviewed by their consultants to ensure prudence, transparency and efficiency.

DESCRIPTION	PROJECT COST ESTIMATES (PCE) (in Billions of Pesos, 2008$)					
	Total	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
I. Non-Revenue Water (NRW) Management and Network Rehabilitation Retail (IRR) Program	10.676	2.743	4.345	1.917	1.796	1.875
A. Recovery Program	10.005	2.599	4.205	1.717	1.653	1.831
1.01	District Metering Area (DMA) Establishment and Network Rehabilitation	1.130	0.07	0.66	0.13	0.16	0.11
1.02	NRW Strategies	0.06	0.06	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
1.03	DMA Fine Tuning Rehabilitation	0.060	0.004	0.007	0.010	0.009	0.01
B. Rehabilitation Program	0.671	0.07	0.00	0.1	0.07	0.00
1.04	Hydraulic Area (HA) Establishment and Rehabilitation	0.1	0	0	0	0.1	0
1.05	HA Rehabilitation	0.571	0.07	0.00	0.1	0.07	0.00
C. Retail Program	0.378	0.068	0.00	0.03	0.06	0.01
1.06	Retail Rehabilitation	0.378	0.068	0.00	0.03	0.06	0.01
II. Supply Side Improvement Program	0.176	0.03	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
III. Network Rehabilitation and Information System (NRIS)	0.03	0.04	0.1	0.0	0.07	0.08
1.07	GIS	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
1.08	Network and Hydraulic	0.0	0	0	0	0.0	0.0
1.09	Leak Detection Equipment	0.0	0	0	0	0.0	0.0
1.10	Work Order	0.0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0.0
IV. Technical Assistance	0.0	0.0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1.11	Engineering and Construction Services	0.0	0.0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1.12	NRW Studies and Advisory Services	0.1	0.1	0	0	0.1	0
1.13	Training and Development	0.0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0
V. Operations Support Programs	0.276	0.081	0.063	0.035	0.000	0.097
2.1	Work Vehicles	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
2.2	Dispatching and Work Force Stations and Resources	0.100	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
2.3	Maintenance and Replacement of Network Facilities	0.176	0.033	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
2.4	Procurement, Maintenance of Meter Network Facilities	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
2.5	Buildings/Offices/Warehouses	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
2.6	Information Technology	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
2.7	Laboratory and Mobile Laboratory and Instrumentation	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
2.8	Engineering Equipment, Right of Way and Survey	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
2.9	Communication Equipment and Mobile Equipment and Other Equipment	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
2.10	Corporate Social Responsibility	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
2.11	Environmental Program	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
2.12	Contingency Services	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
3. Water Resources Programs	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
3.1	Watershed Project in coordination with Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage System (MWSS)	0.000	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
3.2	Watershed Project	0.000	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
3.3	Watershed Facility Program	0.000	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
4. Wastewater Program	0.000	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.000	0.000
4.1	Sewerage						
4.1.1	Treatment Plants and Facilities	0.000	0	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
4.1.2	Sewer Lines	0.000	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.000	0.000
4.2	Sanitation						
4.2.1	Treatment Plants and Facilities	0.0	0	0	0.0	0.0	0
4.2.2	Septage	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
5. Natural Calamity Mitigation	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
5.1	Emergency Tanking & Distribution	0.1	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
5.2	Emergency Interconnection Facilities	0.0	0	0	0	0.0	0
5.3	Portable Treatment Plant	0.0	0	0	0	0.0	0.0
5.4	Flood level of critical assets, fittings and equipment	0.0	0	0	0	0.0	0
5.5	Earthquake Studies and Facilities Investigation	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total CAPEX (at constant in 2008$)	10.907	2.868	4.408	1.952	1.864	1.972
	Approved Adjusted CAPEX	10.872	2.857	7.320	1.934	0.000	0.000

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OPINION

Lamentations

EDITORIAL

LAMENTING THE SUFFERING OF CHILDREN WHO are abandoned, living on the streets, or forced to serve as soldiers in conflicts, Pope Benedict XVI said during his Midnight Mass homily on Christmas Eve: "Every child asks for our love. This night, then, let us think especially of those children who are denied the love of their parents. Let us think of those unborn children who do not have the blessing of a family home; of those children who are brutally exploited as soldiers and made instruments of violence, instead of messengers of reconciliation and peace. Let us think of those children who are victims of the industry of pornography and every other appalling form of abuse, and thus are traumatized in the depths of their souls."

On its face, it was a timely and incontrovertible reminder.

Still, it sparked protests, more particularly from those who are skeptical of the Catholic Church's sincerity when it comes to investigating pedophilia within its hierarchy. To this day the Pope's transfer of a beleaguered American cardinal from his archdiocese in Boston, where he ministers to hold influential appointments, is viewed by such critics as a case of coddling, and not punishing, a prelate who wouldn't pay his fair share when confronted with cases of sexual abuse.

And yet this plaint has issued unprecedented apologies to victims of sexual abuse by clergymen, and encouraged the removal of pedophile-priests from pastoral positions. Indeed, he has devoted much of his energy to a twofold strategy: clarifying Catholic doctrine and bringing it back to basics—regardless of whether or not this displeases "cafeteria Catholics"—while demanding greater maturity and scrutiny of those undergoing priestly formation.

Indeed, the controversial nature of the Pope's Christmas homily to the City and to the World—to which he said saving humanity from homosexual or transsexual behavior was as important as saving the rainforests from destruction—are all in keeping with doctrine. Surveying the political, social and economic conditions of the world, his words echoed Christ's in his stood on the emancipating and ways for Jerusalem.

Catholic belief teaches that there are "sins that cry out to Heaven for vengeance." These, according to the Catholic catechism, are: willful murder; the sin of the Sodomites; the cry of the people oppressed; the cry of the foreigner, the widow and the orphan; and injustice in the wage earner. A deeper look into the Pope's Christmas homily and message shows that these sins are the central preoccupations of his lamentations over the current problems of humanity.

The protests that met the Pope's homily, which he naively expected—but defiance of secular public opinion has been a hallmark of Benedict XVI's pontificate, with its call for Catholicism to be like the parable of the mustard seed, shunning popularity or political correctness—shouldn't overshadow its messages' particular relevance to Filipinos today. Specifically, his appeal for compassion and action to address the plight of young people everywhere, whether those forced to serve as soldiers or sex slaves, or those whose spiritual, emotional and physical health has been, or is being, impaired by poverty. Our country is no stranger to the abuse of young people by the clergy or other people in authority, or their use as child soldiers by rebels, their manhandling by the police, and the callousness and irresponsibility of adults toward children's lives and well-being.

The street urchin mobilizing on a life of crime; the youth whose resentments and poverty lead them to take up arms in violation of all norms of civilized conduct; the boys and girls who never have enough to eat, who cannot study well because of cramped conditions in school—the catalogue of our society's failings in regard to children is vast.

We are a nation fortunate in that the ties of family remain strong; but we are a nation that refuses to take collective responsibility for the way young people are made to endure the shortcomings of their elders.

The Pope's message rang so many broader chord with truth to what he said.

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Dispossessed and disinherited

SEPARATE OPINION

Juggnaut A. Cruz

CONGRESS PASSED THE OTHER WEEK A joint resolution extending the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) for another six months but excluding the compulsory acquisition of agricultural lands provided for under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law (CARL) signed by President Corazon Aquino on June 10, 1988.

The exclusion was angrily protested by the farmers who called it a betrayal of the law that was enacted for their benefit under the social justice policy proclaimed by President Manuel L. Quezon in 1935 and later described by Justice Jose P. Laurel as "the humanization of laws and the equalization of social and economic forces by the State so that justice in its rational and objective sense may prevail over mere rule or brute force."

The humane justice was speaking out of justice in its moral and legal sense as pursuing *good and punishing evil*. As commonly understood, social justice means food in a man's stomach, a roof over his head, contentment for his family, medicine for their ailments, education for his children, faith in the promise of the future and, best of all, respect from his peers in a morally member of society.

The resolution was weakly defended by salons whose vast landholdings have hardly been touched the last 20 years and will remain intact during the next six months and perhaps hereafter therefore. They nonetheless prevailed once again in stuffing in President Estrada's unsponsorable stand that those with less privileges in life must have more privileges in law.

I myself was not directly injured by the decision of land reform opposed by the legislators who greeted once again their super-law-in-practicing their vested interests against the helpless farmers. But I did feel a personal slight from their cold-blooded suppression of the most important provision of the law calling for the break-up of the big landholder for their eventual distribution among the landless.

My frustration was personal because of the small part I played in upholding the CARL in the Supreme Court 20 years ago. Soon after it became effective, its petitions were filed against it for various objections, some justifiably severely stressed by the landowners. The petitions were ruffled to me and gave me the task of studying the law that was hoped to give the impoverished masses their place in the sun.

The inequality of land distribution in the Philippines it is serious problem that has plagued our people for centuries. Large estates in the hands of a few privileged families have kept us a feudal society. Separate and piecemeal measures passed in the past have not succeeded in solving this major obstacle to our progress and prosperity. But now, here was Rep. Jose Ma. Sison, appropriately called the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law that would finally deliver a better life to millions of disinherited Filipinos.

The petitions called for a judicious review of the arguments pro and con considered in Congress and Malacañang before the statute was finally approved in the substances of the dispossessed farmers. The factual and legal issues included the police power of the State, eminent domain, just compensation, due process, and equal protection, among many other constitutional issues, with the busines of social justice flustering on both fronts like the Philippine flag.

Two of my best lawyers in my staff—Anita Asuncion Bay and Grace Mangaoang Tan—rendered a massive research that diligently combined even beyond their office hours. (I find that the search for pertinent jurisprudence to best assigned to the female of the species as natural heavens, no offense to Grace and Anita.)

After examining the memoranda and other pleadings of the parties, I reported to the then my initial findings on the case and recommended its dismissal. The Supreme Court agreed, and I then undertook the writing of the decision, which is now formally called Association of Small Landowners in the Philippines, Inc. vs. Secretary of Agrarian Reform, 175 SCRA 343, it consisted of 41 single-spaced pages, the longest petition I wrote during my entire tenure on the Court. It was unanimously approved by my colleagues, there was no dissent and no need to alter be a supplemental concurrence.

The members of the Supreme Court who joined me in signing the decision were Chief Justice Marcelo B. Fernan, Justices Andres R. Narvasa, Amacrubio Melencio-Herrera, Hugo E. Gutierrez, Jr., Edgardo L. Paras, Florentino P. Feliciano, Emilio A. Gancayco, Teodoro R. Padilla, Abdulwahid A. Bidin, Abraham F. Sarmiento, Irene R. Cortes, Carolina C. Griño-Aquino, Leo D. Medialdea, and Florenz D. Regalado.

In the concluding paragraph of the decision, I expressed in part the farmer's hope for a law, to day under the law that has now sadly become inoperative:

"At last the land we which he toils will be his own. It will be his portion of Mother Earth that will give him not only the stuff of life but also the joy of living. And when they once lived for him only deep despair, now can he see in the horizon of all his hopes for a more fulfilling future. Hope, at last can be found—from his small plot of earth his benevolent and dark overlords and "rebirth in it the music and the dream."

But as the poet ruefully said, "The best laid schemes o' Mice and Men going oft a-gley."

Greed

MOMENTS

Fr Jerry M. Orbos, SVD

THE STORY IS TOLD THAT ON CHRISTMAS Day, an upright politician, an honest businessman and Santa Claus were walking down the street when they saw a $100 bill on the ground. Who picked it up? Santa Claus, of course! Why? The other two don't exist.

* * *

In today's Gospel (Lk. 2, 22-40) we hear of upright, honest and simple people, real people who existed, and whose main ambition was to help make the plan of salvation of the Lord come true—Mary, Joseph, Simeon and Anna. They lived for something and for someone greater than themselves. They were not speculators. They accepted their role in co-operation in God's plan. If you look at yourself as the main character in your life, the lie-all and the end-all of your existence, then you've got it all terribly wrong.

* * *

Pope Benedict XVI in his Christmas message said that greed will destroy the world. It is already destroying the world. The worldwide financial crisis that bears all of its right now was caused by many selfish, greedy (mis)-people whose only agenda was to get more, and more and more and more.

* * *

Greed is already destroying the Philippines. Not only individuals, but even institutions have been corrupted. It has all boiled down to money, money and more money. Worse, even our moral values have been undermined. A whole culture of corruption, cheating and lies has been put in place. We are at our lowest level. What brought us all to this? Greed. We have greedy leaders. It is as if we have never heard of Christmas and it's message to love and to serve.

* * *

Today is the feast of the Holy Family. Even the family, the very foundation of our society is being threatened and attacked on all sides. Let us be alert and be vigilant. Let us not allow greedy and corrupt people to destroy our families.

* * *

By the way, today is traditionally Holy Innocents' Day. But we are not celebrating it this year. Maybe it is because we as a people have lost our innocence and benevolence, because we have set God aside, in pursuit of our worldly pleasures and ambitions. Whatever. May we gain back the innocence of the children, the simplicity of the poor, the trust of the desperate, the hope of the weak. In other words, may we all reminisce our greed, and go back to God's way of righteousness, and learn again to be submissive to His will and plan.

* * *

During my homily at the 11 Mass last Christmas Eve, I saw a mother cuddling her baby in her arms outside the aisles. I asked the camera man to focus on them to bring out the message that at Christmas, many of us are celebrating but Mary and Jesus are alone out of our hearts, our homes and our nations. I brought them inside the studio. Why were they outside? The studio said, "because the baby was noisy." How many times have we shut out people, and even God Himself, from our hearts and from our lives precisely because they disturb us and our comfort zones?

* * *

Last Christmas Day, while a lot of people were celebrating, I said Mass for a family that lost one of its members. What does one say in such a situation? "Merry Christmas"? All that we could say is Bari Christmas in essence, for the sick, the lonely, the poor, the grieving—because Christmas is here, and Christmas stands for fresh starts and new beginnings.

* * *

Christmas Day is over. How we begin our mission to make Christmas happen every day in the New Year. Calling on all Christmas makers: it is for us to be "evangelii" and "evangelizers" of Christmas all throughout the coming year.

* * *

It is easy to feel one with Ba Baby Jesus precisely because He was weak, innocent and poor. But please remember, this same Christmas Baby grew up to be a Jesus who challenged us to mend our ways, and who suffered and died for us in Calvary that we might truly live. Let us end and with Christmas. Let us follow the Child all the way through His public life, passion, death and resurrection, all the way to eternal life!

* * *

How is your family? Is your family close to God? Is your family close to one another? Is your family close to the people? Let us all reflect today on this often quoted saying: "Success outside the home cannot compensate for failure inside the home." Let us go back to the most simple formula for good, holy families: "The family that prays together, stays together."

* * *

Praying that 2008 will be a better year for all of us, in all aspects, in Jesus' name. Amen!

* * *

A moment with the Lord:

Lord, may greed not destroy our souls, our families, our nation, our world. Amen.

An extraordinary court

MANY FRIENDS, ESPECIALLY IN THE DIPLOMATIC corps, are amazed at the exceptional role our Supreme Court has played in our recent history. For example, in 1997 and 2006, it stopped unprecedented efforts to revise the Constitution through a peoples' initiative. In 2001, it declared Joseph Ejercito Estrada and subsidized Maguindanao Governor Andal Ampatuan Sr. president. It has also annulled presidential issuances like Presidential Proclamation 1017 declaring a state of national emergency, nullified acts of Congress, and voided government contracts.

Extraordinary judicial duties. Because of our own experience during the martial law regime of Ferdinand Marcos, our 1987 Constitution granted our judiciary both ordinary and extraordinary authority to check the abuses and excesses of the other branches of government.

Thus, it imposed upon all courts (notably the Supreme Court) two main judicial duties: (1) "to settle actual controversies involving rights which are legally demandable," and (2) "to determine whether or not there has been a grave abuse of discretion amounting to lack or excess of jurisdiction on the part of any branch or instrumentality of government."

Previously, the Constitution spoke of duties, not just powers. A power can be relinquished but a duty cannot under any circumstance be evaded. The Supreme Court must at all times uphold the Constitution. It cannot shirk, waive or equivocate. Otherwise, it can be censured with dereliction or misinterpretation of duty. In this sense, one Constitution has mandated the Court to be "activist," to be an "interventionist" and gravely abusive acts.

It seems ironic that unelected justices are required by our Constitution to check the elected leaders of the country. This is because those justices are not elected to please the people, but to act in spite of the law. The democratic constituency of the Supreme Court is the Constitution, which has been overwhelmingly ratified by the people. Hence, the Court's loyalty is always to the Constitution, not to the President or Congress.

The Court routinely performs its first duty when it reviews judgments of lower courts and administrative agencies. This is referred to as its "ordinary" duty because most supreme courts in the world perform it. The second duty impels our Supreme Court to strike down gravely abusive actions, useless and common of the government. This extraordinary function is not given to most foreign courts.

In some jurisdictions, judicial work is divided among several high courts. Their long-time courts review decisions of lower courts while their Constitutional Courts (like that of Thailand) decide questions involving interpretations of their constitutions, and their High Administrative Courts (like that of Russia) settle administrative and tax government disputes. I do not know how many judges there are in our Supreme Court but only fourteen. In contrast, our Supreme Court has wide jurisdiction over all these functions, and more.

Quasi-legislative functions. Aside from judicial functions, our Supreme Court has also been vested with "quasi-legislative" power. It can, in the court's own rules or laws governing procedures in all courts, conduct the fair examinations and regulates the practice of law. In many countries, the rules regulating court procedures are subject to legislative action. And admission to their bar is a prerogative given to other agencies. Here, the Supreme Court not merely considers bar examinations; it even penalizes lawyers who violate the canons of professional ethics.

Years ago, the Court required all lawyers to be members of and pay dues to the Integrated Bar of the Philippines. Later it also required them to update their skills by taking compulsory continuing legal education (MCLE) seminars every three years; otherwise they would lose their licenses to practice law.

The Constitution also authorizes the Court to "promulgate rules concerning the protection and enforcement of constitutional rights." Using this authority the Court issued on Sept. 25, 2007 the rules on the "writ of amparo," and later, on the "writ of habeas data."

Quasi-executive powers. A third major function of the Supreme Court may be referred to as "quasi-executive." Because the Constitution vests the Court administrative supervision over all courts and the personnel therein[1] "to help it discharge this executive function, the Court appoints a court administrator to actually supervise the more than 2,000 lower court judges and 26,000 judicial personnel all over the country.

The Court likewise appoints and disciplines all these personnel, quite an enormous task given its clogged dockets and other responsibilities. It also "assigns temporarily judges of lower courts to stations or stations as public interest may require." It is responsible for the construction and maintenance of court buildings as well as the procurement of office equipment and supplies. After the president appoints judges, they must come to have an relationship with the Executive Department and refute to the Court exclusively in discharging their duties.

The Constitution endowed our Supreme Court with many more duties, powers and duties, more than any comparable tribunal in the world, even more than that of the United States! Did people expect the Court, as the last bulwark of democracy and the unappealable citadel of liberty, to use these exceptional powers and to discharge these indispensable duties solely to their benefit. Indeed, to whom much is given, much is expected.

* * *

Comments are welcome at chiefjustice@supremecourt.gov.ph

WITH DUE RESPECT

Artemio V. Panganiban

'Learning from Boracay'

"LEARNING FROM BORACAY" IS A HUMANE ONE hours continuity in Bohol, especially from those involved in the effort to protect and preserve the marine resources and environment of the island province.

The phrase is shorthand for many things: the need to check over-development which would lead to environmental problems that are now threatening the fragile environments of Boracay; the urgency of getting all stakeholders—from resort owners to local government officials to communities to NGOs—united behind a common goal and a plan to achieve it; and finding the balance between meeting the people's needs for survival and maximizing sustainability of the environment.

Bohol visited as the next big destination in travel literature, everyone in the province is now a beneficiary of the improved air, land, while the water in Boracay is still in its early stages, to stave off the problems now bedeviling Boracay, from pollution to overcrowding, water and power shortages and even land disputes.

Bohol is not without its share of possible solutions. Leading the part of Englebert one morning, we learned the rising waters and stopped by a restaurant in the middle of the flooded street, close by the island of Panglao and the municipality of Dauis where we could enjoy high and waters and even houses. It consisted of a small bar surrounded by a swimming pool, and a floating platform with fish cages. Transferring by way of a bobbing rubber-boat basa to the bar, we met the owners of Panglao, a cooperative engaged in raising bangus and fish cages to benefit their members, all residents of a nearby barangay. Valerie, the treasurer of the cooperative, explained that the floating platform project is raise seaweed, but found the results waters unsuitable for it. Undergoing training on bangus-raising, and with an initial investment of 400 bangus fingerlings, the members of Bagada, with the support of Panglao, an alliance of local governments, NGOs and people's organizations in the island, organized themselves and now take turns maintaining and guarding the fish cages and marketing the fish harvested. Tellingly, the most active members are women.

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

* * *

HARVESTING began every three or four months, the members of Bagada claim to earn about ₱150,000 per harvest, dividing the profit among themselves according to the hours of work put into the project, and setting aside 10 percent for the organization. Last year, said Judy, the group's president, they were able to earn about ₱2,000 for each harvest, and the organization was able to pay off the loan it took out to build the fish cage structure. "And our group has so much money in the bank!" bubbles exclusive Bagada.

Persuasion, there was a conflict between Bagada and the owners of the nearby resort, which, she claimed their bamboo structure was an "eyesore." With the mediation of the local government, they were able to arrive at an arrangement with the business folk.

We suggest that the owners start inviting tourists over to their land (or by harvesting some bangus for themselves then having the fish roasted for lunch. They could charge 10 times the value of the fish and the tourists would even thank them for the experience, we say. The women are indebted by the suggestion, and dare we hope, launched in a new form of eco-tourism to the area?

* * *

OUR host had planned to dash on a nearby beach where we could talk with members of people's organizations that are all part of Bahayan, which manages all the marine protected areas (MPAs) in Bohol Marine Triangle (BMT). But the water proved too strong for the puny banca we to reach us, so it was decided that we meet instead in the town of Bahayan, whose mayor, Alvin Uy, is chair of the BMT. (The word is an acronym for all the municipalities in the BMT: Panglao, Dauis and Baclayon.)

Here, Mayor Uy welcomed us to his "old but beautiful town," which boasts not just the old-est church in Bohol, but also efforts to preserve Bohol's coastal resources. We also met with Vice Mayor Bobbit Uy, no relation to the mayor, who said she was going priority to women's concerns in her town.

Key to the creation of and maintenance of the marine protected areas are the local folk, whose livelihood must be safeguarded. Creating a marine protected area in a coastal barangay can be controversial, as it can be viewed as intruding into the livelihood of fisherfolk, who are poor to begin with. What is important, said Manuel Boholst, president of the Dauis Bantay Kalikasan Volunteers Association, is to make the community aware of the long-term benefits of a protected area.

Creating a marine protected area means identifying a certain area and protecting it from incursions, either by fishing or diving. The protected area is then monitored by the community, which acts as a "nursery" for fish, assuring the fishing community a sustainable supply. "Sometimes, we get into trouble with our neighbors and even relatives when we take them to the surrounding on the protected area," remarks Felisha. And when this happens, the BCB comes in to resolve matters.

* * *

NOT an easy to resolve are disputes between the community and resort owners. Some believe, recall the members of Bagada, there were some beaches with the creation of beachfront resorts. Some of the beaches have been eroded away down from the protected area. In this case, the provincial government and Bahayan had to enter the picture and mediate before things got worse.

Today, says Damian, the resort owners them-selves are public where their tourists dive, making sure they leave the protected areas alone.

"Learning from Boracay," they realize that all their good intentions would be for naught if the private sector did not get involved.

The New Age divide

WORLD VIEW

Chris Patten

LONDON—SO WHAT DOES 2009 HOLD IN store for us? As ever, the unpredictable ... a terror or an economy or a tech division by a national headline—all take us till. But much of what happens tomorrow will be a result of history.

In the last century, the world's population increased four-fold, and the number of people living in more 13-fold. The world's output grew by a factor of 40, and people's expectancy 33 years. And the emission of carbon dioxide by 17. The 21st century has to live with the consequences of all that, good and bad.

Some of the historical shapes can liven up parts of the 21st century's directions. The age-old idea of our societies are changing dramatically. Asia and Europe have experienced sharp falls in fertility rates. The figures in Hong Kong, Singapore and South Korea are even more remarkable than those in the richer European countries like Spain, Italy and Poland.

At the same time, people are living longer, so that in a generation the number of elderly dependents in some countries will outgrow that of the working age. Europe is already confronting this with a demographic structure that resembles a pyramid—a broad south base tapering to an elderly tip. But now the structure is more like the profile of a skyscraper, more or less the same from top to bottom.

Our older populations have to cope with ever younger technology. This expands educational and employment opportunities. Many workers today are being prepared for jobs that do not yet exist. Whereas some sort of knowledge can rapidly become redundant.

Indeed, half of what a student learns in the first year of a four year technical course will be out of date by the third year. Change itself accelerates. Google has just 10 years to make its mark in the advantages particular more deeply. Every month there are 10 billion searches on Google. It took us the 200 years to reach an audience of 50 million; Facebook did that in one years.

We usually reckon that it is easier for young, unburned minds to handle changes like these. How does someone like me, a generation in the early 1960s, adapt and cope? How will older societies manage new technology and remain dynamic?

The biggest challenge for all of us, young and old, not year and for the relations future, will result from a different sort of change that is unlikely to respond simply to technological determinism. It results from the way we have been living for many centuries. If older leaders do not produce the right answers soon, younger generations will sup the aftertaste—sometimes literally.

2009 is supposed to see the conclusion of an agreement on global warming and climate change to succeed the Kyoto Protocol in Copenhagen. Copenhagen is the venue for the meeting. Optimists chose the departure of the Bush administration and assume that the arrival of the Obama presidency, which unlike its predecessor is not in denial about the existence of global warming, will unlock the prospect of a deal. Pessimists note that just mounting economic woes around the world are being used as an excuse for inaction or even to achieve emissions.

Whatever happens in our energy inefficiently will not mitigate the painful effects of the global economic crisis. If we make today's problems the excuse for failure to save the environment, we will simply pile up much bigger—and potentially catastrophic—problems tomorrow.

China is the biggest of the emerging economies, clearly understands this. Whether India does as well seems to me rather more doubtful. China faces its own environmental dangers—for example, water stress. It does not want to use its indigenous coal reserves as well as the government's efforts to improve energy efficiency. China will work for a global consensus on climate change. The big question is whether it will be able to impose tough environmental standards through out the whole economy.

The United States problem is also mainly one of domestic politics. There will be no worthwhile American offer on the environment until there is a deal in Congress. This year's task may be to create a global understanding in Copenhagen that is not too prescriptive. Just as there are international and inter-which an American domestic political agreement can be incorporated once Obama achieves it.

But all of this sensitive diplomacy could be undermined if, in response to rising unemployment, there is an outbreak of trade protectionism in solving America, Europe and China. That is when the economic and environmental agendas could finally collide.

So young and old alike should hold on to their hats in the exciting but dangerous years ahead. All of us must hope that the first historian governors demands on presidents current this even century and the rest of humanity into a safer and more rural relatively prosperous life ahead.

Project Syndicate

Chris Patten is a former EU commissioner for external relations, chairman of the British Conservative Party, and the last governor of Hong Kong. He is currently chancellor of Oxford University and a member of the British House of Lords.

Stealing Christmas

IT BEGAN WITH A ROARING, PIGGING, AND A VOICE OF. something to be let through the front door. Of course, when your best friend is the reigning queen of the obstetrics complex, you do not immediately open the door. You pick up the broom and rush through the room for the 11th time. You pick up all random paraphernalia that are not where they are supposed to be—including rolls of sticky tape, scissor cut, rolls. Then, finally, you open the door.

Rebel Without A Clue

Patricia Evangelista

Nicole has been a friend for the last five or so years, a scholar in sociology who has turned me amazing eyes and love to various members of the male population, including several of who are unaware of my existence, has provided theoretical frameworks for my various and impulsive changes in opinion, and whose lifelong goal appears to be the collection of various psychological profiles in 64 sizes and widths. So it was into what can only be called a quarter of a when she requested her friend in buying her a notebook into binder for Christmas. The past two years has been punctuated by bimonthly pursuits from Amsterdam or Paris or London, or wherever in the world she is studying with her trusty laser-like precision. Our shopping that night was a result of two weeks of planning on her part, including various e-mails dropping back friends who have answered not on the globe to "dinner at Pat's." My letters from her consisted of enumerated outlines of my various responsibilities that included "ask your mom for food."

When she walked into my apartment two hours early, she should have heard uncontrollably at the fact I used a pre-manual of a printer to label my boxes of tapes, began picking up stray hangers that I missed, and vowed lastly half when I had the gall to put the pants on the computer table—"they belong on the food table." Then she stopped off her mischief, informed me before, and began to complain. I began to complain. I began to—that his daughter was a mess, and proceeded to—then her up and down the hall stairs carting up books and the use door frame pillow. That she said nothing about the fact that the dusty floor was making both our lives feet the opposite water color of graveyard dirt is a testament to our friendship.

When you live in a two-room apartment and share room with several hundred lit majors of books, nothing but people to walk through the front door is already a challenge to the laws of physics. An attempt to add any more warm bodies would turn the place into a den of iniquity—supernatural or other wise. Last Monday, I 12 people and a Dalai—no, no, never you into the account as one to one—we stuffed those into my the to the kitchen, and the living room, and the hall of two dozen of they sprawled. Cameras flashed. Toys were rifled at jokes and Nicole, for whom this was the last unmarried Christmas, sat in her corner of the bed and happily discussed the state of her wedding invitations—and the color ink.

I sit on the same bed now as I write this. I have just discovered there is a left-over cake in a box on my bedside table, and as there is nothing left in my refrigerator except for two Tabasco bottles and mayonnaise, I offer thanks to the kind soul who left the box. I am pleased to report that six days of isolation, under a pile of unopened, last month's jeans, another tape candles and new gift wrapping does not damage in any conceivable way my ability to work. David will be in Singapore and Mike in Japan, the others will be having weight in line school or getting weight to matrimony, Nicole will be organizing her list of wedding demands, and I will still be sitting here, still writing, still pretending to be grown up, and still hoping that nothing will change until the next time they knock on my door.

* * *

Email: pat.evangelista@gmail.com

THEY SAID

Impossible 18

"I am confident about what I'm telling you—that we cannot amend 18 amends to approve any removal of a comma, adjectives, adverb, verb, pronoun, article or preposition from the Constitution."

—Senate President Juan Ponce Enrile

Death before dishonor

"We shatter the steel, do not steal; we shatter the to-mahawk, do not chase; we master the punishment, do not lie. I am responsible life. Live by our code—death before dishonor."

—Former Solicitor General Frank Chavez, quoting his father in a speech after being conferred the title "Defender of the People" by a lawyers' group

Wanted: better leaders

"Filipinos deserve a better kind of leaders than what we have now."

—Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines

Constitutional rape

"It's like entrusting your teenage daughter in the care of a rapist."

—Member of Makabayan coalition Liza Diño Maza on the proposal to give a constituent assembly to amend the Constitution

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TALK of the TOWN

Please send feedback to: [illegible]@inquirer.com.ph

John Juan V. Sarmiento Jr.

NOODLES enjoy robust demand in Japan and other countries because of the high cost of living, while luxury brands hold sales to attract customers. Ramen shops and bags on display in Hong Kong.

GOODBYE, LUXURY; HELLO, FRUGALITY

By Asia News Network

AS THE GLOBALRECESSION cuts into home, luxury items are the first to go for Asia's middle class.

The global financial meltdown is undoubtedly changing people's spending habits and they are tightening purse strings, saying goodbye to "it" bags and turning to instant food to survive the crunch.

Is this the end of luxury?

Not for ultra-rich, no. But for those caught in the middle, perhaps.

With salary hikes on a freeze and people's disposable incomes shrinking, Asia's luxury market is suddenly feeling the pinch.

Chanel sale

In Japan, where the region's most savvy and fashion-conscious shoppers are, designer stores, including Chanel and Salvatore Ferragamo, are holding sales.

Yet these high-street brands so much down their items is nothing new in the past, the Japanese consumer has been on the decline since early this year and the Japanese are becoming more price conscious than before.

"[My salary won't go up, and this economy isn't what it is, so I don't feel like buying an expensive brand bag," said a 27-year-old company worker in Shinjuku, Daiki Fukuzawa.

It used to be said that 40 per cent of Japanese women carry an item imbued by the French brand Louis Vuitton, earning that brand and others' one income.

But because of the economic slowdown, Japanese women have no choice but to fight for a piece of the pricier spending.

Ferragamo dropped prices of 42 items, including bags and shoes, by 7 percent to 18 percent. The first time store that found opened a shop in Japan in 1992, Chanel put some of its designer bags on sale, a "first" event in a spokesperson for one of the department stores admitted.

China's luxury goods market has not been spared from this financial crisis either.

Tightening purse strings

At a luxury goods fair in Shanghai in October, vendors noted that buyers were tightening purse strings and not paying for astronomically priced luxury items as readily as before.

Combined sale of China's top fairs offering luxury goods, the event usually draws many leading brands from across the world to entice well-heeled buyers, but lower-grade items sold out earlier in the most attractive discount.

"[But online sales in low- and middle-level products, while the most expensive item, is the round necklace valued at 7 million yuan (US$1.05 million), is still on display," said a brand manager of a Swiss jewelry company, who did not want to give her name.

"The global financial crisis will undoubtedly ripple the purchasing power of the wealthy," she added.

A Singapore sculpture dealer said the company only sold a 30,000-yuan (US$4,300) piece during the exhibition, although many people had inquired about its price.

"Although the situation for the domestic market is still not clear, luxury consumption will certainly be affected by the global economic crisis," said Liu Zhang, an analyst of the luxury goods industry.

Luxury spending is said to have made China one of the nation's largest markets, despite it still being a developing country.

"One of the most influential factors for luxury consumption in China is the young generation, which shows great enthusiasm for famous brands," Liu said. "Previous surveys had shown that many consumers of luxury goods were young office workers, whose purchasing power for the items was increased's unstable."

It is therefore "not surprising" to find that, in any economic downturn, this group of consumers will be the first to stop buying, Liu said.

Lifestyle change

A number of the city's most down-to-earth already making significant changes to their lifestyle, beyond splurging on luxury goods, to face possible financial risks.

"We are spending too much," said Su Ying, a Shanghai office worker who has cancelled a shopping tour to Europe this Christmas with her husband.

"We go there every year, but now the prices are too high. So we must cut down on a great deal of unnecessary expenditure," she said.

Aside from not buying luxury items, people are also letting go of some of their previous preservations.

A banker, who wanted to be known only as Allen, weighed in. to a traditional wish shop in Singapore recently carrying a printed US$1,000 Gerald Genta timepiece.

Unloading luxury watches

There, the young man, his pursewed himself under siege from his gigantic economic slowdown, sold the watch for a song.

It was the third time in two months that Allen, who is in his 30s, had been forced to quit with a timepiece from his five-watch collection, which had cost him more than US$12,000.

"In these times, you must getting rid of things to survive and keep only those things you really need," he said.

Arlin is among a growing number of high. Here who are unloading their luxury watches for cash in Singapore's numerous centers to their occasion in city years.

Secondhand watch shops

MODEL Pauly Bertin shows off a diamond-studded Bulgari watch, a necklace and earrings.

have been flooded with brands ranging from Rolex to the already-high-end Patek Philippe as watches, cuckoo clocks and other luxury items have made financial sense.

White-collar stress

Economists say this is one of the clear signs that Singapore's upper crust is feeling the crunch of the economic downturn, which has already forced low- or income families as right to their belts.

"It is symptomatic of white-collar stress and definitely means things are [not] as widespread than before," said Bank East Capital economist Leong Wai Ho. "People are getting rid of luxuries they don't need."

Many expect the situation will get worse as because worst of a deep global recession.

Instant foods flourish

While gloom may hover over most manufacturing and trade sectors, makers of instant foods are profiting from the crisis.

In South Korea, for instance, processed foods manufacturers—Nongshim, Ottogi and Ilsung Yakuh—are posting double-digit sales growth amid the economic downturn, thanks to robust demand for instant noodles, commonly known as ramyeon, and pre-prepared dishes.

Nongshim, Korea's largest ramyeon maker, said total sales between January and October this year reached almost 1 trillion won (US$887 bil. lion). Of this, instant noodles accounted for 902.75 billion won, up 11.8 percent compared with the same period last year.

Ottogi said strong demand for items like ramyeon, instant curry dishes and other quick-meal fares helped the company post 978.2 billion won in sales up to September, a 22.5-percent jump from last year. At the same time, net profits surged 21.3% percent, to 49.1 billion won.

Ilsung Yakuh, famous for its ramyeon dishes, has seen an increase in demand for its instant noodle products, which grew by 32 percent.

Industry experts attribute the rising demand for instant foods to a individuals choosing to limit expenses in general dining out, while seeking more affordable comfort foods like ramyeon and pre-prepared dishes instead.

South Koreans are also the hardest hit from the crisis.

Poor overnight

Korean students to China who used to live it up now have to follow a tight budget after finding themselves "poor overnight," due to the crisis.

Shin Hye-young, 24, an undergraduate at Beijing's University of International Business and Economics would eat out at restaurants five days a week and thought nothing of spending 40 yuan (US$6) on eats.

That lavish lifestyle was made possible by the monthly allowance of more than 5,000 yuan (US$727), or about twice the amount what a typical worker would make a month on construction site in Beijing.

But the good times are over for Shin, and other South Korean students like her.

The Chinese yuan has soared hard, with the value of the Korean won plummeting from about 1 yuan exchanging for 130 won in 2005, to almost half as 1 yuan to 220 won.

There are more than 60,000 South Korean students studying in China and most of them are from middle-class families. Struggling to use finances in Beijing, or "Korea Town," is said to be home to about 20,000 South Korean students or media reports say many South Koreans have left the area since the financial crisis broke out.

A rural outcry against was ignored as saying that close to half of his fourth Korean customers recently cancelled their housing rental contracts. And her agent said he had lost half of his South Korean customers.

At a South Korean restaurant in Hangjing, waitress Li Jin said most of her diners were students. But there have been old-fashioned customers since December, she said.

For students like Shin, meals now consist mainly of rice and a simple soup she cooks herself. She has moved into a smaller apartment, shared with another student. She also rides the bus now, "It's only 1 yuan for the bus fare," she said.

Heading home

Faced with a plunging home currency and higher tuition, a number of South Koreans students around to have headed home.

The won, which is the worst-performing currency in Asia, has depreciated by 40 percent to video against the US dollar since the start of the year.

But the plummeting value of its currency is not all bad news for South Korea. The tourists are flocking to the country, which has become more well to-friendly.

Yuri Kaneko, a Japanese expat living in Seoul and who gets paid in yen, is encouraging her relatives and friends in Japan to come over for a shopping spree.

"The exchange rate plus the lower hotel exchanges for airfares and promotion in Japan has made South Korea a very attractive place to visit," she said.

The stronger Japanese purchasing power is evident in Lotte Department Store in Myeondong in Seoul. One can see massive increased shares of cash or "cheap" in Japanese at the duty free store.

American lawyer Phillip Jenkins, 46, who has been living in Seoul since 1995, said: "The "good" times are back for us. The last time the Korean won was so weak was 11 years ago during the Asian financial crisis."

Bicycles

The free-wheeling spending of the expatriates is in sharp contrast to the belt-tightening of the Koreans. The locals pack their hotels in the office, ride bicycles to work, delay the purchase of big-ticket items like plasma TV sets and refrain from holidaying abroad.

Yeon Hee Seo, a South Korean government is using the weak won to re-start the Europe to tourist dollars. Even Tae Ryun, deputy minister for trade and investment, said foreign participation necessary. "It's the right time to invest, because the Korean won has been devalued quite a lot."

Other governments like China and Taiwan have introduced measures to boost domestic consumption.

Christmas bonus

In Taiwan, the government is issuing vouchers worth NTD3,000 (US$100) as Christmas bonus in January. The government will be pumping NT$82.9 billion (US$2.47 billion) into the market with the vouchers accepted in business transactions with discount establishments.

Given a few restrictions such as not being able to cash in the vouchers at banks or exchanging them for coupons in department stores and supermarkets, all Taiwanese are locals, young and old, can put for anything anywhere with their vouchers as if they were paying in cash.

"We can buy a bowl of beef noodles...stay in a hotel or visit a karaoke bar...you can even buy gold as an investment or pay a surgeon's services."

In these hard times, a US$100 plus voucher goes a long way. Just not enough to buy an "it" bag.

(Asia News Network is an alliance of 28 newspapers, including the Philippine Daily Inquirer, published in 18 Asian cities.)

BRANDS, like Louis Vuitton, are losing their appeal to Asia's middle class as people prefer to spend on basic goods that are no longer seen.

Across the NATION

Bigger LGU role urged in anti-Red fight

NEWSBRIEFS

■ DUMAGUETE CITY

PJM for earthworms

THE Mayor's Oriental government has allocated P70 million for organic farming, specifically to fund the production of organic fertilizer, or Gov. Emilio Macias II said during the recently planted peso-coin trees.

The amount would be used to buy vermicomposted soil for the stocking of farmers, he said.

Negros Oriental agriculturist Gregorio Pulmera said farmers from 134 barangays had been trained on vermicomposting.

Barry S. Amoguis
Inquirer Visayas

■ LAGUNA

Woman held for shabu

A WOMAN was arrested in a buy-bust operation in Biñan on Tuesday.

Rina Santos, 38, of Sitio Cirera, Barangay San Antonio, was arrested by intelligence operatives of the Laguna Provincial Police Office, a police report said.

Confiscated were five sachets of suspected shabu (methamphetamine hydrochloride) and the marked money used in the buy-bust operation.

Marvin Cruz
Inquirer Southern Luzon

■ CONSULATE-CITY

Soldiers seize logs

OVER a million pesos worth of illegally cut logs were seized by soldiers and militiamen along the national highway of Barangay Barbaran in Datan Norte, South Subanen district over the weekend.

Maj. Edmundo Batbatong of the Army's 39th Infantry Battalion said they packed heavy personnel and equipment of the Citizens Armed Forces Geographical Unit (CAFGU) in Pandakan as reported by forester Rufino Rafael Mayor Tesoro Macario, who complained of the army base of illegally cut logs.

Charlie Z. Batican
Inquirer Mindanao

■ LAGUNA

1 killed in bar shooting

A PERSON was killed while two other's were wounded in a shooting incident in a resort bar on Dec. 12, a police report said.

Police identified Jesus Paul Bonsato, 19, Hannah Lee Dimayuga, 21, and Christian Garcia, 19, all the Black Hole Bar in Los Baños at about 12:30 a.m. Garcia died while en route to a hospital, while the two were reportedly wounded. the report added.

Brigadier Rafael, a nonspecified man identified as a suspect in the fatal shooting. He was detained at the Los Baños police station.

Marvin Cruz
Inquirer Southern Luzon

■ CLARK FREEPORT

Canadian chef found dead

A Cabal Club restaurant employee as a chef at the Fontana Convention Center here was found dead early today.

The body of Eliza Lopez Balbastro, 32, was discovered by Fontana worker Ferdie Pasco and driver Marcos Ilan at 8:30 a.m. at the second floor lounge storage room, police said.

Senior Inspector Rogen Tuga, chief of the Clark Development Corp. security department, said Pasco and Ilan found Balbastro hanging from the ceiling, with a telephone wire looped around her neck, Tuga said.

Sandra Cruz
Inquirer Central Luzon

R. Cuevas, 84

DR. FERNANDO M. Cuevas, daughter of Victorino M. Cuevas Sr. and Angela M. Cuevas of Cainta, Rizal, died on Dec. 20. She was 84.

She is survived by sister Concordia C. Bautista; brothers Bernardo, Vicente, Ramon, Antonio, Moises and Raphael.

Interment will be at 10:30 a.m. on Dec. 21 after a 6 a.m. mass at the Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Sampaloc, Manila.

BAGUIO CITY—THE GOVERNMENT IS BUILDING more roads and bridges in 2009 to help fulfill its target of ending the communist insurgency by 2010. It is also departing more local governments to help meet this target.

Avelino Razon, deputy director general of the National Security Council, said President Macapagal-Arroyo had ordered the National Peace and Order Council (NPOC) to involve all the local governments in the drive.

Razon said the NSC gave the nod to a security briefing during Friday's NPOC meeting at the Mansion, the official residence of the President here.

He said the anticipated would monitor should be severe enough to launch a counter-insurgency drive in the provinces.

He said increasing government infrastructure would help sustain the economy, although this was not discussed to avoid alerting the NPOC session chair Mr. Arroyo.

But he said the council members should give the government-led infrastructure boost as a counter-insurgency strategy.

Razon said a would recession would also affect food security and commodity prices and urging to ensure that would be used by the communist movement to its advantage.

He said local government support would be vital because the NPOC plans to increase support for rebel returnee projects at their level.

These projects include subsidy funds that are offered to surrendering rebels in exchange for their firearms, as well as increased livelihood packages, Razon said.

The NPOC is also being encouraged to include all service agencies deployed to assist efforts to shield poor Filipinos from the influence of the New People's Army.

Razon said the NSC had asked the NPOC to amend its rules by including the Department of Social Welfare and Development, the Department of Health, the Department of Education and the Department of Trade and Industry in a reorganized council.

Bringing development to rural areas where insurgents operate would complement increased combat operations that would target rebels operating in Bicol and Southern Mindanao, he said. Howard Calleyas, Inquirer Northern Luzon

Tourists flock to Baguio, Subic, Clark

TOURISTS HAVE RUSHED northwards to spend the long holidays in famous tourist areas like Subic, Clark and Baguio City.

There was 10-percent increase in traffic volume at the North Luzon Expressway, the 84-km road connecting Metro Manila to Gerona and Northern Luzon.

"On Dec. 26, the Iriga tollplaza volume increased [by] 66 percent of normal volume because most are going to Baguio," Betty Jane, corporate communications head of the Tollways Management Corp., said on Saturday.

For the other roads that TMC operates—the Subic Freeport Expressway and the Subic-Clark-Tarlac Expressway (SCTEX)—traffic volume ran pat by an average of 10 percent daily since Dec. 22, she said.

Record breaker

Traffic volume on SCTEx broke records since the Subic Bay was opened in April, said Robert Gerwanis, spokesperson of the people's bulletin Basic Conversion and Development Authority.

SCTEx motorists totaled 27,961 on Dec. 24, with collections from the P2 per km toll increasing to P1,217 million, he said.

The number of motorists and amount of collections record on Dec. 25 and 26 at 26,140 for P1.24 million and 23,926 for P1.16 million, respectively.

"We passed the highest number on [Dec. 26, Friday]," Gerwanis said.

TMC, he added, had to create its counter flows (making its entry lanes as exit lanes) on the Clark Freeport Zone and Subic Bay, and on the Tarlac segment in the morning due to heavy traffic.

Quevedo said the highest contributors were the Clark Logistics, Tarlac and Tipo, indicating that the prime destinations were Clark, Subic and the northern areas.

"We are requesting assistance possible build up on Sunday and Tuesday Tollow and patrols are on extended duty for immediate deployment should there be surgery," Gerwanis said.

Heroic at the Subic Bay Freeport are 100-percent booked, according to Yvette Ocampo, business development coordinator of the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority.

"Subic is extremely well-attended. It's very nice. Metro Manila. Everything is in one place and people want to be relaxed indeed during food times."

Ocampo told the INQUIRER in a telephone interview.

Clark Freeport drew in local and international tourists for the holidays from Dec. 23 to 26, according to Vivencio Gracia, tourism department head of the state-owned Clark Development Corp.

Two hotels reported at least a 20-percent increase from last year's figures.

More than 5,000 people filled the Nayong Pilipino at Clark Expo on Saturday. The park's managers expected the number of visitors to double when the year-last business of the City of Iron Pentadok "pandesal" dinner on Saturday and Sunday night.

In Baguio City, the volume of visitors also jumped in the summer capital packed shopping malls and stalled traffic in the downtown area.

Many tourists also chose to spend the holidays by pitching tents and spending their second Rainbow Rock.

The city tourism office estimates the visitors to have reached 150,000.

Tourists have booked all rooms at Camp John Hay Manor and Baguio Country Club as early as October, but smaller hotels and inns received walk-in clients only this week, the hoteliers learned.

Many visitors decided to camp out at Burnham Park instead, said Hermenia Pastoriza, a park gardener and traffic aide. Some also have been vending at the park for 20 years now.

Benedicto Allandero, city tourism officer, said he expected to end the month with 300,000 tourists because December is normally the month when the city receives its peak tourist [illegible]. Reports from Emerly Orejas, Inquirer General Luzon, and Vincent Cabreza and Bernie Cohen, Inquirer Southern Luzon

Baguio's clean air law exempts private cars

BAGUIO CITY—THE CITY GOVernment on Tuesday launched its first clean air ordinance, vowing to finally manage the quality of air in the mountain resort city.

Tourists who drive up in smoke-belching vehicles are not exempt from Ordinance Number 45-2008, said Councilor Peter Rotinsulu, chair of the city's committee on environment.

They are "not licensed to pollute the best city's air," he said.

In a press briefing, he said all vehicles found violating the emission standards would not be allowed to ply the city's streets, at least until motorists are able to fix their engines.

The new ordinance affects about 10,000 public utility vehicles and over 20,000 private vehicles here.

Rotinsulu said the ordinance was delayed. It responds to an old Motor Bank report citing the level of pollution at Baguio's downtown area.

"The delay was one [the city council's] fault," said Rotinsulu, a former city prosecutor.

Rotinsulu, the city environment officer, and the Environmental Management Bureau of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources announced the creation of a clean air monitoring and [illegible] dedicated to enforcing the new law.

Exceptions

But advocates of the ordinance were surprised to find out that the council also passed on third reading a separate measure that exempts private vehicles from a number of its provisions.

The other existing ordinance controls the movement of all vehicles here.

Perfecto Ifurung, chapter president of the Federation of Public Utility Jeepney Operators and Drivers Association for Baguio, Benguet and La Trinidad, said the council's action does not support the city's air quality campaign.

He said the transport sector is challenging the new ordinance during measure since it neither the draft of Mayor Reinaldo Bautista Jr.

Cordillo Administrative City environment officer said the clean air ordinance will rely on a list of emissions who owe vehicles.

Ifurung said they have started putting down a number of all public utility vehicles entering Baguio, he added.

Inventory

Edna Tolentino, area coordinator of the United States Agency for International Development Environmental and Clean Air Project, said Baguio universities could be tapped to help the government conduct the first inventory of the city.

The inventory is necessary because Clean Cairo is required to issue violators a warning before the city government cites the owner for violation and confiscates his or her vehicle's plate.

The violators are also required to pay a P1,000 fine when a warning is issued, Rotinsulu said. The next Celeste, Inquirer Northern Luzon

Ghanaian in Clark dreams of going home

By Tonette Orejas
Inquirer Central Luzon

CLARK FREEPORT—HOLLYwood never Tom Hanks' 2004 movie "The Terminal" were featured to end in Clark again. And the Ghanaian caught in the real-life deportation drama at the Diosdado Macapagal International Airport hopes to finally find some New World order. To get $1,200 (P60,000) for a plane ticket to bring him home to his country.

That 308 is all that Inspector Kawesu needs to return to his labor African country and be reunited with his mother, a regular worker, in their village.

"There no other option but to return home. I have no money," Kawesu, 31, said on Friday.

The Inspector learned of his predicament when he called immediate Clark Air Base police office to Inspector Ely on Friday, using the contact numbers he found in the Dec. 12 issue that was sent to him by Filipino firefighters stationed at the BMDO emergency services department (EMS).

A caller at the EMS radio room must be served with three letters from the airport within a month of stay in a room at the DMIA passenger terminal.

Kawesu is the second Ghanaian stranded here after football player Sid Mi Ayew, who was deported by Singaporean authorities in Clark for six months in 2006 for lack of embarkation.

Kawesu said he arrived in the Philippines on Feb. 27 via the Ninoy Aquino International Airport. He wanted to study at the Technological Institute of the Philippines, one of a number who worked in a fishing company.

But tragedy struck.

"I lost financial support when my brother died [in an accident while at sea]," he said. His father died five years ago.

Idle, he joined the Lake Arizona Evangelical Mission, serving as a missionary. The mission's outreach center, holding Bible meetings every Sunday.

At Christmas season, Kawesu used his remaining money to book for a flight to Malaysia en route to Bangkok to connect to Ghana.

He boarded Air Asia in Clark on Sept. 28. That same day he was back in Clark. "I had no money also to Malaysian authorities deported me here," he said.

That was when a guy in the DMIA passenger terminal became his home.

Several days and nights passed without his getting any food. This ended was broken when Filipino airport personnel took notice and extended their kindness to him, he said. He then sent his dinner packs.

On the money pooled because Filipino missionaries, Kawesu tried taking a Bangkok flight on Dec. 19 Again, the lack of money was nipped his departure.

A court on a United Arab Emirates plane will cost him $1,200, as of Saturday, all he had was P800 and $20.

At Clark, he occupies a nook at the EMS conference room. Here, all he has is a mattress lent by the employees and an Bible given Monday's plane by of Filipino friend.

Kawesu does not lose the connection among men, preferring the natural December cool. Strewn on the cot carpet are old issues of newspapers and his Bible.

A security guard is assigned to watch over him. While he is here in room the EMS workers to eat, exercise and get fresh air, he is not allowed to leave DMIA or Clark.

Like at the DMIA personnel, he has access to a bathroom.

An Arab's dinner packs contributed to raise his Airport workers, however, said Kawesu has grown thin.

Filipino firefighters saved his Christmas wishes when they

JAMES Kawesu points to his home. He called the INQUIRER on Friday to seek help from strangers who can help him buy a plane ticket for the trip home. Contact Kawesu at 0911.226.9452.

INQUIRER Mindanao

E-mail or general mail/department email:
Website: www.inquirer.net/regions

Editor Jon Bondoyen
Bureau Chief Nico A. Alconaba

A 'lumad' exodus every holiday season

By Jeffrey Tupas
Davao City

EVERY NIGHT SINCE THE FIRST WEEK OF DECEMBER, the public gymnasium of Barangay Mintal in Davao City's Calinan District smacks of a flea market: One must holler to be heard or force oneself to get through the crowd of more than 5,000 Manobo and Bagobo peoples, mostly children.

Add up the countless sacks of used clothing, second-hand toys and kitchenware, the scores crouched on a box.

Most of the children suffer from ailments as a result of overgrowth. So far, a 1-month-old boy and another child have died from severe diarrhea.

Through the years, the uplands has been played out. "Lumad" people from the upland villages flock to the city during the Christmas season. They dance and try to sing songs in their native tongue, and be as colorful as their wares, not but loneliness confin...in exchange for "fifty" (cash) goods.

Stories behind exodus

But they do not always get the goods and sometimes end up being ridiculed by the lowlanders.

The stories behind the exodus, however, manifest the poverty gripping those who often inhabited the city.

They believe that asking or begging would somewhat ease their plight, the reason why they sell root crops or backyard animals for fare in going to town.

"If we still do do this, how can we be able to buy clothes? How do you think we will be able to buy rice? This is our solution while we wait for the corn to be harvested," said Marlyn Macaberang, a resident of Bukidnon.

"If we rely only on farming, there is not a slight chance that we will be able to buy basic stuff like clothes, salt, sugar and coffee ... We are not choosy. They are even hard to down their rugs and we will gladly accept them and wear them."

Macaberang and the other "lumad" inside the gymnasium fall in line to get food rations containing two kilos of rice, two sardines and two noodle packs.

Over the past years, the city government has welcomed the indigenous markets, feeding and clothing them. According to the City Social Services and Development Office, at least 8,000 families from the upland villages of Marilog, Calinan, Paquibato and Toril districts is in for to Sabidnon are now in the city. (The other sessions occupy gymnasiums in Buhangin and Bankerohan.)

City programs

When Macaberang and her family arrived in Davao City two weeks ago, they saw the harshness of some brown sources whom they expected to be accommodating.

"Some people do not give us anything. But there are those who good to us and we would only go to our feeling hundred. You know, if they cannot give us anything, it is fine with us. We do not mind. We are only asking for their compassion," she said.

But while they go around the city and perform for "pasalubong" (gifts), other lumad refuse to join them, according to the practice that they are alien to their culture and tradition.

Arturo Gamboy and about 40 families from Kanapnapan in Marilog are staying put. And so is the family of Hanayak Ordinario, a Pulangihon Manobo from Pinamula, Kibawe Bukidnon.

"The indigenous peoples do not celebrate Christmas. It is not in our tradition. What we are doing is we are celebrating only the government because it is the government who really shows us kindness," said Ordinario.

"They used Christmas as an instrument of begging," said Pr. dio Sagay, of Ekip Bukidnon, Barangay Magsaysay, also in Marilog.

Because they are in the city to celebrate the festival with the Christians, Gamboy said they were waiting for the food packs being distributed by the government.

Councilor Myrna Dalisda Gaña, one of the officials actively involved in the city's "lumad" programs, said the food rationing was meant to discourage the people from going house-to-house.

"We want to erase the practice of begging because they are not supposed to beg. The sad part is when they experience being mocked and derided by the public as they perform dances and songs in exchange for a few coins," she said.

Show of affection

"It is sad because they are supposed to be the people who are indigenous in Davao City ... they are the ones who own forests and they are up there in the mountain area, living in conditions of poverty," she said.

A paper prepared by anthropology students Rhon Vitel, Ina Angelica and Jessie Vergara Jr. of the University of the Philippines-Mindanao, noted that "the lumad are simply doing a experiencing to show of affection) from the strangers (well off or rich)."

"Sheer wonderment and the attraction of this city of lights might have also pushed them to move down for a visit to this welcoming season. There are incentives in the uplands being the central business area of Davao where the city appears like a thousand thrillers at night," they said.

The paper also pointed how a son of a Manjigoma Dato joined the throng to the city even against the will of his father who said it was "shameful" for their family.

"His only bargain to his dato father is simply that he will not do any panaggom (smoking) but only to wait for gifts from (Davao City) Mayor (Rodrigo) Duterte," he said.

According to Myhil Pelagio, head of the UP-Mindanao's anthropology department, one of the realities behind the panaggom is the poverty that the "lumad" face in their homelands villages.

"They're really poor and if they have lands, these lands have been displaced from their lands by aggressive forms of development. There is no dignity in begging but some of our lumad sisters and brothers no longer think of this because what's more important for them is how will they be able to feed their children," Pelagio said.

LUMAD residents of the city's hinterland areas crowd the gymnasium in Mintal.

Sunday SPORTS

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Libot Toddyvic S. Melendres

Baguio suits up for Air21; Yeng quitting Red Bull post?

By Marang R. Castillo

HE WAS SUPPOSED TO BE ON VACATION by now, probably unwilling the pines six month or getting a tan down south to celebrate the long holiday break.

Instead, Cyrus Baguio will be donning the colors of Air21 today and—depending on the result—for maybe a little longer in the SPC/PBA Philippine Cup as the Express try to survive the wild-card phase today at the Big Dome.

The trade involving Baguio and Celino Cruz for Air21's first round picks in the 2011 and 2013 Drafts was approved yesterday after commissioner Sonny Barrios got an assurance from both teams that they will continue to uphold the league's rules, particularly those concerning the salary cap.

Meanwhile, sources said yesterday that Red Bull coach Yeng Guiao is set to tender his resignation as Banako coach soon, ending what has been a successful partnership with the Floridablanca franchise.

Guiao's resignation will free up room time for him to focus on the national team, where he is head coach.

Guiao has recruited a successful PBA campaigns with the Barrios, winning several title despite a roster decimated by one-sided trades.

Red Bull, over the years, has lost several team dues to these trades, including Baguio, who tries to help Air21 in its 8-p.m. game against Purefoods.

The Express haven't beaten the Giants in two meetings this season.

Cesar Catis and Jun Magsaysay play a similar knockout game at 4 p.m.

Cruz, according to Air21 team manager Lito Alvarez, is still in Cebu to attend the funeral of his grandmother.

"If we get lucky (against Purefoods), Celino can start playing for us on Jan. 4," said Alvarez, who confirmed that Baguio, who was traded to Red Bull's bowling scrap with 16 points a game, was able to squeeze in two practices for the Express.

A solid card is awarded to the sixth-to ninth-ranked teams after 18 eliminations round games, with both games today sending the losers packing and the winners into another you-or-me game on Jan. 4.

Only one team will survive this round and will play quarterfinalists in seeking Barangay Ginebra in a best-of-three series. Defending champion San Miguel and Rain or Shine will clash in the other quarterfinal matchup.

GAME TODAY
(Araneta Coliseum)
4 p.m.—Cesar Catis vs San Miguel
6:30 p.m.—Purefoods vs Air21

The Express will come into this game the losers of their last three games, or since losing founder de Ocampo to a knee sprain Feb. 10. Those three losses denied the Express the chance to make the playoffs outright and made the road to a second-conference, the series appearances a little longer—and tougher.

But not if Baguio could help it.

The high-leaping swingman out of Cebu's power forward Jason Tomas given coach Bo Perasol another solid offensive option after Gary David and Aywind Santos

Injured Warriors trip Celtics

NEW OPA FANS: guard Chris Paul (right) shoots over Houston's Aaron Brooks. The Hornets outlasted the Rockets, 88-79. AFP

OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA—SHORN OF its franchise-record winning streak, a depleted Boston Celtics team gave up a 14-point lead and lost to the struggling Golden State Warriors 99-89 in the NBA on Friday.

Stephen Jackson scored a game-high 28 points and Monta Ellis added 22 as the Warriors (playing Warriors against the Celtics (27-4) saw their Boston hand a 19-game winning streak stopped by the Los Angeles Lakers.

Golden State (19-22), who trailed 72-64 after three quarters, began the fourth with a 21-8 run to take an 87-78 advantage with 5:12 remaining, the lead built on Jackson's 13 points during the momentum-swinging stretch.

"I just didn't think we could get control of it with our defense," Boston forward Paul Pierce said. "We allowed too much dribble penetration. That's just not the way we play defense. I thought we gambled a lot and it opened up their three-point game."

The Warriors were without guards Jamal Crawford, Monta Ellis, and Corey Maggette yet still managed to outlast the defending NBA champions, who were led by Pierce's game-high 31 points.

Rajon Rondo recorded 11 points, 10 rebounds and nine assists for the Celtics, who were beset by 24 turnovers in losing consecutive games for the first time this season.

Golden State snapped the streak but in the league-to-setting defense but was able to convert chance to score 17 fourth-quarter points.

Boston's woes was further damaged when they lost starting center Kendrick Perkins in the first quarter due to a shoulder injury.

"It kind of caught me off-guard," Boston coach Doc Rivers said of the injury. "I know he was in (Thursday) night and I know he'd get treatment this afternoon, but I just assumed that he would play." Reuters, AP

(GAME NO. 488: ROCKETS: Blanc 10, Dikapo 7, Charlie 18, Ron-Ron 17, Mercado 15, Ilon-Ilon 10, Mendoza 10, Ishiba 10, Ilon-Ilon 10, Rookie 7, General 2, Rainbow Dig 10, Lim 12, Dalao 10, Cruz 10, Mahinay 10, Lucas 10, Sacramento 10, Golden State 10, Jones 8)

ASIAN CLUB CHESS

Tagaytay rips Mongolia for share of lead

By Roy Luarca

AL AIN, U.A.E.—TEAM TAGAYTAY CITY, Philippines persevered to rout Mon.Gol of Mongolia, 3.5-0.5, Friday night and keep its share of the lead in the 1st Asian Club Cup at the Al Ain Sports Center here.

The all-Grandmaster squad, led by 13-year-old sensation Wesley So, posted their second straight victory for a perfect 4-0 points under the match-points system, the same result of top seed Al Ain Chess Club 8 and co-leader Iranian.

So, the country's No. 1 player, kept his point under stern pressure in beat Czechoslovakia Bajocsa-Mihaly with the black pieces after 36 moves of a Queen's Indian Defense and trigger Tagaytay IM's onslaught.

Following So's lead, Darwin Layla and Mark Paragua replicated their endgame prowess to down Nimbid Batrijan and GM Buyar Tinatinbaeva, to board four and board three, respectively.

Building the early line of a power, Layla prevailed in a Queen's Gambit Accepted while Paragua, who was the last to leave the playing hall, triumphed after 69 moves of a Sicilian Pozenbaum.

Only John Paul Gomez was unable to secure the full point as he settled for a hard draw with Pilot Master Dejanel Batchuluun after 54 moves of a French Defense in board two. The Filipinos rallied second a 4-4 drawn of M.Bhuvan (Orissa) in the opening round.

Tagaytay City-Philippines, seeded fourth among 30 teams from 20 nations, will open for their third straight win against Tilikum Chess Club, also with 4.0 points, in the third round starting 4 p.m. (8 p.m. Manila time) on Saturday.

Tajikistan fanned Al Mahabissi of Syria, 2.5-1.5, in the second round to join Tajin-bir-Ref Al Ain 8, Jagr Shamo of Iran, Club India, Mumbai Warrior Club, Qi Yuan Club (Ukraine) and Gherbik Chess Club of Uzbekistan at the helm of the $60,000 Swiss-System event.

Though Super GM Sergey Karjakin (ELO: 2730) wasn't fielded, powerhouse Al Ain A mounted Club hitchers of Singapore, 3.5-0.5.

Moving up to board one, GM Zahar Efimenko drew with GM Gleb Hol, while Grandmasters Bartlet Jones, Gabriel Sargissian and IA Chan battled Filipino IM Julio Catalino Sadaria, Indonesian IM Utio and FM Peter Long in succession.

The top-ranked Al Ain 8 is represented as third in Emirates, the youngest player ever to become a GM at 12 years and 10 months, against IIIS seeded Gherbik in the third round.

Other interesting pairings pit second seed Jagr Shamo against No. 7 Club India and No. 6 Vietnam Victory Club against No. 3 Qi Yuan Club.

SPORTSWATCH

Coach E 2009 opens at four venues

THE COACH E BASKETBALL SCHOOL OPENS ITS 2009 SEASON #3 four venues starting next month.

International Basketball Academy (IBA) president Gino Nuñez said the clinics for players ages five and up are slated at San Beda College-Alabang (Jan. 20-Mar. 14), The Zone Makati (Jan. 21-Mar. 14), Kaiser Schneider San Juan (Jan. 22-Mar. 14) and Globalcity in Libis (Jan. 23-Mar. 14).

"We are very excited to offer the gift of physical exercise this coming two underlining the Coach Basketball School," says Nuñez, of the clinic supported by Hi-Smart Multivitamins plus from Alpha Multivitamin Pharmaceutical Corporation.

For details, call the Coach E hotline at 631-1195 (Mobile) and 0927-5762530 or at the_pr@yahoo.com and www.coach-e.com.

Camp John Hay Chairman's Cup tees off

BAGUIO CITY—THE CAMP JOHN HAY GOLF CLUB, FINISH FINISHED hosting the very successful Fil-Am Men's Invitational, hosts the the ninth Chairman's Cup tournament starting today.

Club chairman Robert John Sobrepeña is expected to host close to 300 participants in the two-day event in the country's summer capital. Members will play in the Flighted format while the guests and sponsors will compete in the Medalist system.

Prizes will be given to the overall champion, low gross, and the top three net winners per division.

A five-day, four-night Asian Cruise from Royal Caribbean International's Voyager of the Seas, a set of irons from Mizuno, a Titleist tight golf ball courtesy of the Turf Company, and three LCD TVs are at stake as hole-in-one prizes.

Cabinet secretary, politician maul 56-year-old dad

BARBOUR CENTER'S MIKEE ROMERO should be at the Araneta Coliseum tonight to watch the game between Purefoods and Air21.

If confidential reports are accurate, Mikee is set to take over the running of the Linx franchise in the PBA second conference, which starts March 6 (or earlier).

Looks like Mikee is wanting to get his feet wet. He was at the Big Dome on Christmas day for the Talk 'N Text-Air21 match. He was seated at the commissioner's row with Barbour team manager Erich Arejola.

If he was wearing his one-of-the-teams, Mikee didn't give himself away.

Cyrus Baguio left immediately after the first game.

• • •

If Mikee shows up at The Big Dome tonight, for sure something big must really be cooking.

From what I gathered, Cyrus Baguio and Celino Cruz were his personal choices for Air21. Which is why I expect him to influence the debut of Cyrus tonight.

Celino will not be able to suit up as yet because of an injury.

• • •

With Cyrus and Celino out of Red Bull, what will happen to the team next conference?

The way the very same question I asked a Red Bull insider yesterday, hoping that I could get a clear indication concerning the fate of the Clear franchise.

According to the insider, the plan is to maintain a competitive but less budget-wise indefinitely.

"But there could be some changes. I will know for sure after tonight's meeting with top management," he said.

Speaking of meetings, I understand that

IN HUDDLE

Bambi Calio

PBA commissioner Sonny Barrios had one recently with Tony Chua of Red Bull and Leo Alvarez of Air21.

He says they talked about the trade. But did they also talk about the mechanics of franchise sales, change of team owners and the like?

• • •

I received a chaotic phone call from other night from a former high school classmate at St. Joseph's College whose daughter is a juggler.

She was a bit incoherent but from what I gathered, a violent incident involving a politician and his father, who is a cabinet secretary, and the family of a fellow juggler had occurred earlier that afternoon.

"They were at the Valley golf course, it was a misunderstanding in schedule. There was a heated argument, and then the politician and his bodyguards started pummeling on the helpless 56-year-old father of The juggler. The boy begged for them to stop beating his father, but when they did, instead, turn their fist on the boy, drawing their guns. He was bleeding in the ears when he broke free," she related.

A more detailed report was sent via e-mail by the victim but I need to get the side of the politician before I reveal their identities.

• • •

Back from a swimming competition in Bangkok, I expected coach Susan Papa to announce the lunch of the meet when she dropped by my house.

Instead, Susan extended me on a religious mission.

She wanted to know if she had broken a promise or vow to attend a birthday party which she had kept for two decades.

"It so happened that we were in Bangkok on the first night of the birthday gala, and could not find a catholic church that offered such a service. After making inquiries with the Filipino community in no small, the nearest thing we could do was to attend a 7 p.m. mass scheduled on the eve of the first day of the birthday gala series. We figured that it could take the place of the actual birthday gala," Susan related.

That night, they were picked up by a cab and brought to the church where there were quite a number of people in attendance, mostly Thais.

"There were so many people we had to take the back pew. The altar was filled with flowers. The mass had been going on for sometime when we noticed that some people were crying. We wondered why. The homily was delivered in Thai and we could not understand. That's when we saw a part of the casket which we did not see at first because it was covered by flowers. It was a mass for the dead that we had attended. All the hair in my body stood when I realized this. My question is, did I break my promise?"

• • •

The Second class of Laguna is holding its first-ever reunion in Tanauan's today. GSC president Jun Magsaysay will highlight the activities lined up by organizer Edgar Tanseal of the GSL.

Puentevella eyes passage of sports bill amendment

By Marc Anthony Reyes

REP. MONICO PUENTEVELLA said yesterday he will spearhead the speedy approval of the amendment he proposed to Republic Act 6847, which aims to increase the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation subsidy fund fund.

The newly elected chair of the Philippine Olympic Committee said the proposed amendment will be taken up by the committee on youth and sports headed by Speaker Prospero Nograles and is expected to be passed to the plenary immediately.

"I don't see any problem with (the amendment's passage)," said Puentevella.

Pagcor presently remits five percent of its net earnings to the Philippine Sports Commission. That amounts to approximately P225 million a month.

PSC chair Jolly Ramirez said if they get the percent of the gross earnings instead, the agency stands to receive as much as P1.00 million a month.

"This is money we can use to send more athletes abroad for training, among other things," Ramirez earlier said.

Puentevella said he expects the Lower House to pass the amendment without a hitch, and even stated that the Senate "is already waiting for it," said the Bacolod solon. "Hopefully we can do that first few months of the year and by then President Arroyo will approve it."

Puentevella said the Pagcor has no problem with the proposed amendment.

The country is planning to field a lean but mean delegation to the Laos Southeast Asian Games in December 2009 in a hope to redeem itself after placing sixth in the 2007 edition where it won just 41 gold medals.

SMART FORMS NEW ALLIANCE WITH PNB FOR SUPERIOR REMITTANCE SERVICE.

More OFWs can now send remittance fast, safe and easy via SMART Money.

The latest partnership of SMART with PNB has made sending remittance more convenient for Filipinos working abroad. With branches all over the world, OFWs can just go to any PNB branch, remittance center or subsidiary and send money straight to their loved ones' SMART Money account. Transactions are made at the speed of text and without the usual risks of sending cash through mail. To ensure the security of this transfer, beneficiaries are informed of the delivery via an SMS notification to their SMART cellphones. With SMART Money and PNB, you can be sure your money is in safe hands.

PNB has the most extensive international presence among Philippine banks. It has 104 offices in 14 locations in the US, Canada, Europe, the Middle East and Asia. This esteemed bank is the pioneer in the OFW remittance business and was conferred Sentrol ng Pilipinas Hall of Fame award for Outstanding Commercial Bank Reporter on OFW Remittances.

This move from SMART to further upgrade its remittance service is the most recent among many alliances made in the past. Elmer M. Maleiko, SMART Head of Financial Services, added that "This partnership with PNB underscores our commitment to work with bank partners in providing the public with innovative mobile banking and mobile commerce services." Other partner companies include SMART Padala, BDO, Landbank, RCBC, NCB, Western Union and Chinabank.

The benefits of SMART Money are endless for subscribers especially overseas Pinoys. Consider the ease of converting your remittance into cash any time of the day without having to wait for a bank to open. This is because SMART Money comes with a card that you can use to withdraw cash from over 2000 ATMs or swipe for instant purchases in any MasterCard establishment. Of course, traditional encashment can still be done through over 100 SMART Wireless Centers and thousands of SMART Money fulfillment partners nationwide. Money inside the SMART Money account can also be used for groceries, bills payment or even load transfer. Only SMART Money can provide this outstanding service.

To enjoy the benefits of SMART Money, text MONEY to 343 and download a virtual account. Upon getting a virtual account, apply for a SMART Money card at any SMART Wireless Center or simply log on to www.smart.com.ph/money and apply online.

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Editor Alejandro S. Ulanday

NEW YEAR WARNING

Cops who fire guns to lose jobs—Javier

By Beverly T. Mabalidad

LUMANIA (CALOOCAN), Malabon, Navotas, Valenzuela policemen who still fire their guns to welcome the New Year with a bang will simply face the end of their careers.

This is the stern warning of Northern Police District (NPD) director Chief Supt. Edu Javier to his men amid the chamber's decision not to end the gun ban, rein of their police force with a tape, as was the practice in the past to prevent them from firing their weapons to join the New Year revelry.

Javier said in an interview that, working as one, they have set required their policemen to seal their guns for the New Year.

But he warned policemen that violation of the policy against firing weapons in the New Year celebrations will warrant a dismissal from the service.

"We emphasized to our police that if they violate this policy their careers as policemen will come to an end. This is a grave administrative offense and any violation is unacceptable. The punishment will be dismissal," said Javier.

Javier added that police should not also think that they can fire their guns and get away with it because simply shells can be used back to their weapons.

According to Javier, they also decided against gun-toting this year as it sometimes happens the fear instead of the gun itself, affecting their use of the gun in celebrated ritual time.

Nevertheless, the station commanders at the four cities accused under the NPD are free to decide whether or not to seal the weapons of their police force or not, depending on the situation on their respective areas.

For example, Javier said, the Caloocan city police has decided to only tape the barrels of their long firearms but not their pistols. The Valenzuela police will seal all their guns, while the Malabon city police has chosen not to.

HOLIDAY MOOD
Children enjoy the glitter of Christmas lights and decorations during a night out with their families at the Quezon Memorial Circle. (STORY BELOW)

Python scare in Sampaloc

AN EIGHT-FOOT PYTHON caused panic among residents in Sampaloc, Manila, yesterday.

Rudeng Infantad, a resident of Dalisay Street in the area, said the python was first spotted on Christmas eve, wriggling its way inside the ceiling of an apartment unit.

"We waited for it for a few days then dismantled the ceiling to force it to come out," Infantad said.

Infantad, with the help of neighbors, finally captured the snake (3 measure later and put it inside a sack. Then it, Senior Fire Officer 2 Emmanuel Empar said the fire broke out around 8:30 p.m. on the ground floor of a three-story house occupied by the victim's family along Quezon Street, Sto. Magdayao, Tondo.

Initial investigation showed that a cat knocked over a lighted kerosene lamp placed near the bed where the victim was sleeping and set the house on fire. The fire quickly spread to four other houses which were made of light materials.

Damage to property was placed at P100,000.

Toppled gas lamp causes fire; 1-month-old boy hurt

By Tina G. Santos

A MONTH-OLD BABY BOY and several families were left homeless when a fire believed caused by a lighted kerosene lamp toppled by a rat gobbled up their homes in Tondo, Manila, on Friday night.

The boy, identified as Emmanuel Salvador, suffered burns to the face and different parts of the body. He remains under observation at the Philippine General Hospital.

Senior Fire Officer 2 Em-

METROBRIEFS

Baby dies also

THE BABY of the pregnant woman who thrashed a robbery after jumping off a moving passenger jeepney died Friday. The man, confirmed by a staff of the Mary Johnston Hospital, where the 8-month-old baby was confined for a few days. The boy's mother, Jean Rose Pulmer, fell head first on the pavement after she leaped from the moving vehicle on Dec. 22. She died from internal hemorrhage. Her baby was taken from the victim through Caesarian section and was in an incubator before he died Friday. Elena R. Ibañez

Robbery victim

A SECRE, worker lost more than P1,15,000 in valuables after thieves broke into her home in Barangay Tambo's Villapa Hotel, Quezon City, before 6 a.m. Saturday. Police said Lucrecia Padilla-Esparcia, 45, discovered the theft when she woke up. The members of the Jesus Bukay gang broke into the window screen and the house's back entrance to gain entry, police said. They took three laptop computers worth P150,000, a digital camera worth P12,000, and two cellphones worth P10,000. Julie M. Aurelio

Drive-by shooting

HELDS Tamara, 31, was shot while driving outside his home in Barangay Old Balara, Quezon City, when shot dead by unidentified men in a Toyota Revo on Friday night. The victim died from multiple gunshot wounds in his body. Police are still investigating possible motives for the killing as well as the identities of the assailants. Julie Aurelio

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 23, 2006

"WE ARE IN GOOD SHAPE DESPITE all the bad news coming from developed countries. Our economy is not too dependent on exports and on foreign investments."
ARIEL ABUEVA CUISIA,
December 2006

GLOBAL Pinoy

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This section is dedicated to Filipinos overseas toiling on land and at sea, in backbreaking, in construction sites and in the homes, of the world to secure a better life for their families. These are the o sho bo.

My Father Boarder a gift from Brunei

By Tony Alabastro
Contributor

CHRISTMAS IS LIKE OUR father. Both come once a year in our lives.

Any man can be a father but it takes a special person to be called Father Boarder.

He tells me Father Boarder because our ate Inia says a real tatay is the one you see on our "boarding" house in Manila, for a month-long holiday from his overseas posting in Brunei.

Because our father works overseas, the Philippine government hails him as a hero and an overseas treasure. Overseas Filipino workers like him, 13,000 in Brunei and some million in other parts of the world help keep the economy afloat, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said.

Five summers ago, we were lucky to be with Father Boarder in his work site in Bandar Seri Begawan, 45 minute City by the Canoe or the Begawan, a ride by, toward on the last Father of the Islamic nation Haji Hassanal Bolkiah, the 29th ruler of Negara Brunei Darussalam, the abode of Peace, an Islamic sultanate south of Mindanao.

And because he had spent enough to send us all five children and Mother Boarder to an overseas holiday to the Brunei capital, Father Boarder texted us on his Nokia 3110 to expect a smaller Ka. Bibaya box this Christmas.

JUST like anywhere else, children dominate a Christmas party in Bandar Seri Begawan, giving everyone a good time. CONTRIBUTOR PHOTOS

Balikbayan box

Mother Boarder is teaching secondary school students in Sungai Akar, Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei, after having defended her assistant doctor of philosophy enrollment, graduating summa cum laude, and getting congratulated by Madame Hajah Aminah Ahmad in her graduation day at the Universiteit ng Gong ond ng Hiawatis. Mother Boarder just attended to faculty club matters, raising enough funds to buy 10 boxes of groupie for her fellow teachers' Christmas party in a Manila public school.

A Balikbayan box is an overdued career full of goodies that an overseas Filipino worker sends by sea cargo to the family one or two months before Christmas. The children are the greatest oil at the airport before the in the hands the plane to go to an overseas work site. They will never again admit to the parent whose work contract is finishing and who is flying with chocolates, clothes, sneakers, coffee, canned food, lotion, powder, shampoo and giveaways.

Father Boarder haphazardly tells us how he ended up buying the Balikbayan box of stuffed toys.

Because it was a school holiday sale, he went to factory-looking, a toy shop to a resale-like building, which had since closed. In the Brunei commercial area, to window shop for a possible November birthday gift for Mama.

The stuffed toys at 50-percent off instead time to pick them up sure after the office, and he kept accepting what the sales ladies suggested until he had a few hundred left.

He says the way the salespersons attended to him made him feel like he's Bill Gates.

Then he called up Forex Cargo Brunei, the resales firm to which he just sent two Balikbayan boxes of goods to ship home to Manila earlier in the day. He needed a third box to stuff in the toys, which the cargo people packed, sealed and shipped right inside the ley store straight to Manila via the Mabini Port. It must have been the first time such a thing has happened in the store.

Something for everyone

Fifth prize tags attached to them were Hugi Bunny with a football and no-escape carrot, bonus Taz, the Tasmanian Devil, wearing a black jacket, white-and-black underwear of the Cat in pyjamas, yellow Tweety, black Daffy Duck, a three-foot brown Wiley Coyote, Fish Panther, Bunny the rabbit dinosaur, a green reversible plush mustard and mole with a window's hand that sings, and lots of multicolored teddy bears. The regular low-sales over 40 stuffed toys neatly hurt.

A month later the boxes arrived in Manila. Lola Basha, Mother Boarder's auntie, agreed to receive the three Balikbayan boxes sent by sea cargo from Brunei. She had her picture taken at the pond of stationery to be posted to the dispatcher.

The night the boxes came, we slept his treasure of maintenance after receiving our best gifts ever.

It reminded us of that November morning, when we were awoke a long time ago, when we awoke up to find the living room full of toys under the Christmas tree.

This time, we had more than enough stuffed toys, which we hung from the ceiling, and scattered the rest on the blue carpeted living room.

Mini store

My youngest brother Ivo put some instructions on our cousin's head attached to a plant and neck and showed it off to our sleeping grandma whom he had woken up.

Our grandma screamed in unison: "Your mother has red eyes!" when the eyes glowed in the dark.

Baby Girl Thoda got a pillow-sized Popeye's hand. Tua Tua snatched a Daffy Duck for his girlfriend, and the Platypus by himself. The favorites of Father were Fish Panther, Taz and Wiley Coyote. Ivo went for the stunning Looney Tunes characters.

With all the stuffed toys strewn all around, the living room looked like a mini department store.

First-time children couldn't resist hugging the baby-sized stuffed toys. There were rents, which they would sometimes cry about, was to bring was stuffed toy home as souvenirs for Christmas.

Not a very loud "No!" we curtain remained.

Pilow, the Thea was 10 years old. Brother Brandon left home to work overseas for the first time, and on his first annual home leave, when Ivo was born, he bought his five children a brown teddy bear each.

Eighteen years later, the bears have multiplied. We have finished our university education and are now part our mess. Tua Tua is now a metallurgical engineer assigned in the Brunei offshore oil rigs, but it is first you university student. But deep in our homes, we are still kids with a Father Boarder who comes home once a year to play on us his expensive pasalubong.

We love him so much and we really make him so much we are thankful for having him in our lives.

A FILIPINO cooks up some tasties for King Bolkiah, heroes of diplomacy, surrounded and romancing overseas Filipino workers.

Where they party in the kingdom

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN—THIS house by distant land has become a famous symbol of Filipino hospitality, hosting dinners for presidents and kings, diplomats and government officials, employers and employees, overseas Filipino workers and their families.

But during Christmas, the house also brings together to the dining table ten-year-old orphans, mothers facing problems, victims of illegal recruitment and human trafficking and distressed workers, making sure they feel the spirit of the holidays despite their plight.

It's called "ang Pahay," a two-story house standing on a half-acre land in Kampong Ganda (forest), which serves as the official residence of the first Philippine woman ambassador to Brunei and dean of the Brunei diplomatic corps, Virginia Fernandez Hernandez.

It is also the home of the ang Sulsa Christie Family Fellowship, founded by Remedios and Bruce Salgado 6 fabulous two years ago, which provides help to distressed workers.

During Christmas, the house teems with dessert and glows with several miniature Christmas villages displayed on the sofa, while the long dining table, bread-covered in Pampanga, brims with buns, cheese, native chocolate, apples, oranges, grapes, chocolates, cattle, chicken and pieces of cut Turkmen made of cupcakes on the house.

Last year, the Philippine Embassy gave its Christmas celebration to some Filipino flavor, starting last chicken soup in coconut (tinola), homemade soft bread rolls, fresh lumpia, sandard lumpia with called egg spring roll, fried chicken, pancit canton spaghetti to dipkaraoke and Brunei government officials.

Distressed Filipino workers joined the midnight dinner while graduates of the Filipino-language course of the Philippine Embassy queued for the traditional Filipino ice cream cart waiting beside the dining table. Tony Alabastro

No love crisis on Christmas

IMFO
Leandro Santos Francisco

IN MY ALMOST 20 YEARS IN the United States, this was my first time to spend Christmas and boarding alone that has affected not only native-born Americans but mostly immigrants.

There are many problems cause that are brought about indirectly by the economic crisis. The stress level of many immigrants about to lose their status, jobs and homes is very high. In the last few weeks, we have seen a different Christmas preparation that was not as joyous as in past years.

All these are signs of the times.

As an immigration law practitioner, we hold steadfast in our profession, mindful of evolving changes in legislation to make sure that our clients are afforded competent legal service. Unfortunately, the economic crisis in the United States has affected us in a way that is not physical crisis but is more emotional crisis to many clients that it is hard to ignore.

My family spends Christmas in the Philippines every other year. This Christmas is the year when we have to spend the holidays here. My two daughters, Jen and Jessa, installed in an apartment forward to their holiday vacation. I have to admit that I attended to cancel the vacation but decided to come be free of frustrating my daughters. To their delight, I announced that we would have a two-week trip, including stays at Boracay and my hometown in Angeles City, Pampanga.

During the flight, I was determined not to think about problems at San Francisco. Though I was not indifferent to what was going on, I turned my work mode to vacation mode a day before we left.

I was happy to be with my family and to be away temporarily from a stressful environment and from the crisis. I also enjoyed my youngest daughter that I would try my best not think about the predicament of the immigrants and not to worry about work during our vacation. This was to be our bonding time.

On the next day after our arrival, I called to our mansion. As I was being massaged, she started asking me questions about migrating to the US. I explained to her the many challenges of migration. The chance of obtaining visas based on employment petition is still dependent on the US economy. Without confirming it, my vacation mode turned into work mode.

On Christmas Eve, my eldest daughter asked that we listen to Jeepney's songs. So before we could to celebrate Christmas at midnight. After dinner, we proceeded to one of the places that had a live band playing. It was relaxing to listen to good music and Christmas carols. I said the magic played a medley of versions of the Bing's "Elgildanan to New York." The lyrics were changed to "I am an alien, an illegal alien (instead of a legal alien)." My eldest daughter looked at me and just laughing at the new my facial expression. Sure, that moment, all vacation mode was switched off again. I was reminded of the uncertainty about in the US and the decision of legislation under the Obama administration.

After attending an early Christmas Mass, my family decided on two different activities. My husband and my youngest daughter went shopping. My eldest, carrying her 8-box camera, and the rest of us headed to the beach. Our children celebrate their Christmas Eve. I once with her to the Arts community in Bulabog, Boracay.

As we strolled Bulabog, we were led into a community of Artes ("arts"). There were at least 15 "huts" for the artist and more than 20 families. I spoke with Sister Clara, a nun from the Sisters of Charity. She referred me to Debra, 46, "Kapitana" of the group.

I interviewed Debra generally about life and she said they are "free" and do not have real problems except those about their land. She said she was a fifth generation Aeta and that the Ibinays (referring to non-Aeta) took title to their land. "We are still hoping that some day, we will have titles to our land. All these belong to my ancestors," she claimed.

Meanwhile, my eldest daughter was taking pictures and giving out lollipops she bought from a nearby store. More than 20 children approached her and were smiling as her cute pointe her camera at them. Both of us experienced a warm feeling as they welcomed us to their community.

Then lives were so simple. They were content to eat their meals a day and to have a roof over their heads. The children were just playing, roaming and having fun.

When I asked each child what they wished for Christmas, most of the girls mentioned "Barbie" dolls while the boys wanted toy "trucks" they call "tamaraw." Some say pencil sprinkles. Some also need clothing because most of them eyes are wearing any. The Kapitana said not to bother as it is an accepted way of living for them to not have clothes because of the weather.

After our hours of interacting with the members of the new community, I met with Sister Clara again and thanked her for the hospitality. We gave a small donation.

I did not feel that my good was accomplished without her. Filling the relative of the children, I told Sister Clara, that from San Francisco, CA, we would be sending a box of toys for the children. My daughter was elated as we left the community until the end to us. Sister Clara said she would take care of the children's Christmas party.

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Despite the crisis, whether or not there is an economic stimulus package, what is important is the attitude within our hearts to count our and touch the front of our loved ones, the closest persons we have to shield from all these trials. It is time to do a "family stimulus package" and fill it with love, patience and understanding. Perhaps, this is our New Year's hope.

Leandro may be reached at [illegible]

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140 killed as Israel planes bomb Hamas areas

GAZA CITY—ISRAELI WARplanes on Saturday launched a massive series of air strikes on Hamas compounds inside the Gaza Strip, killing at least 140 Palestinians, according to medical personnel.

Most of the dead are believed to have been inside police headquarters, Hamas said.

The widespread air raids followed days of rocket and mortar attacks on Israel by militants inside Gaza, which the Jewish state had warned would be met with hostile reprisals.

The Islamic movement's credit stories said that more than 180 people were also wounded in the raids that began at 11:30 a.m. (0930 GMT).

An Agence France Presse journalist reported dozens of simultaneous air attacks across the besieged and densely populated territory.

The Israeli military confirmed the air strikes, saying they had begun to put a halt to steep "terrorist attacks" from the Hamas-run enclave.

"Our aviation intervened massively on Saturday against Hamas infrastructure in the Gaza Strip to stop the terrorist attacks of the past several months against Israeli civilians in southern," an Israel Army spokesperson said.

"We had warned the civilian population in the Gaza Strip of our attacks and Hamas, which rules within the population, is solely responsible for this situation," the spokesperson said. "Our operations will continue and will be expanded if necessary."

Television pictures showed pall of smoke hanging over the city and panic in the streets.

Israeli leaders had thrown cool to carry out a major operation into Hamas-controlled territory in a bid to halt rocket and mortar attacks by Palestinian militant groups after a six-month truce ended on Dec. 19.

Israeli media had reported on Friday that the Jewish state would soon launch an operation in the Gaza Strip, but added it would probably be limited in scope and not a full-scale invasion.

Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas has condemned Sunday's Israeli raids, according to his spokesperson in the West Bank Palestinian political capital of Ramallah.

"The Palestinian presidency condemns the Israeli attacks and calls on the international community to intervene to end them," Nabil Abu Rudeina said.

Violence in and around the Gaza Strip has flared since the ceasefire ended. The conflict resumed dramatically on Wednesday when militants fired more than 60 rockets and mortar rounds in response to air strikes over the coastal strip.

On Friday, 13 rockets and mortar rounds hit southern Israel, causing no casualties but damaging a house that was unoccupied at the time.

Two Palestinian girls were killed when what was thought to be a stray rocket or mortar round hit their house in the north of the densely populated territory.

Israel had responded to each air rocket attacks by tightening the blockade it imposed after Hamas violently seized power in Gaza in June 2007.

However, dozens of rocket-loads of supplies were delivered to Gaza on Friday after Israel decided to temporarily allow in humanitarian aid.

In the same time, the Israeli government issued dire warnings to Gaza militants, saying it would strike back hard if attacks continue.

"I will not hesitate to use Israel's strength to strike at Hamas and Islamic Jihad," Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said in an interview with Al Arabiya television on Thursday, adding ominously that "tens of thousands of children and innocents" would be at risk "as a result of Hamas's actions."

Hamas has sworn to the destruction of the Jewish state and has warned that it would retaliate by resuming suicide bombings inside Israel. The last such attack claimed by Hamas was in January 2005. AFP

32 killed in China explosion, accident

BEIJING—AN EXPLOSION rocked a Chinese village and a construction fell plummeted on the government's provincial capital Saturday, killing at least 32 people, the official Xinhua news agency said.

The blast in Songguozhong village in central Henan province happened just after 1 a.m. when detonators being illegally stored by a villager went off, Xinhua said, citing officials with the local work safety office.

It was unclear what caused the explosion that flattened more than 10 homes, killing at least 15 people and injuring nine others, Xinhua said.

Rescue operations are reportedly under way to pull some survivors from the rubble, Xinhua said.

Separately, a 16-storey workers at a residential development being built in Changsha, Hunan province, crashed to the ground at around 7:30 a.m., killing at least 17 people and seriously injuring another, Xinhua said.

China's construction industry has been hit by a string of deadly accidents in the past months, including the collapse of a half-built subway tunnel in Nanjing that killed at least 27.

Officials have vowed to improve work safety, but inclement and mining accidents continue to kill thousands each year.

Dongguancheng village, the site of Saturday's explosion, was hit by a similar accident in May 2006, in which 10 people, all her making detonators, were in said Inform.

PRESIDENT-ELECT Barack Obama orders shave ice for her two daughters, Malia and Sasha, at a snack bar after they watched a dolphin show at Hawaii's Sea Life Park on Friday. AFP

Obamas visit aquatic park, eat shave ice

WAIMANALO, HAWAII—A DAY after spending a quiet Christmas evening at their vacation retreat, President-elect Barack Obama and his children watched a dolphin show at an aquatic park and then picked up some shave ice, a local treat.

Obama and his two daughters, Malia and Sasha, visited Sea Life Park on Friday. Reporters were not allowed to join Obama inside the park, and aides to the president-elect did not immediately have a roster of other joined Obama for the 90-minute visit. Obama's wife, Michelle, was out in reporters' view during the outing.

Obama and his family are on a 12-day trip to Obama's native Hawaii, a family vacation that the president-elect is trying to keep as private as possible.

Visitors to the park said the Obamas attended a dolphin show. Some visitors showed reporters snapshots they took with Obama, who assumes the presidency in less than a month.

Malia and Sasha later ate shave ice at Kokonuts Shave Ice and Snacks while their dad ordered a plate lunch.

Obama joked with reporters traveling with him that he would use his lunch time, or set an example for his daughters. The president-elect then ordered a mound of shave ice, covered orange and green.

He laughed as the children and family friends ordered their snacks, which included frozen treats in plastic islands, vanilla and cherry.

"I'm not arguing anymore," Obama said in faux exasperation when one of the group's young members asked for a complicated blend of flavors poured on her cuddly dessert. "I gave up."

He also relieved us bite pursuits a plastic bowl of the slush—a second offer this week.

evening after he relieved lower on reporters waiting while he played golf on Sunday.

"Guys, here's your chance," he said. "See? I'm telling you, this is really good."

Seven took him up on the offer.

Obama has largely stayed out of public view while at a rented vacation home near Honolulu. His spending, no businesses, on hosted political meetings. Just family and close friends, holed up behind stone and iron walls at the 88-million beachfront home his last trip before he takes office on Jan. 20.

In his 11 bay worked AP

Pakistani soldiers mass near India border

ISLAMABAD, PAKISTAN—Pakistani moved thousands of troops from the Afghan border to the eastern border, raising tensions between the nuclear-armed neighbors on Saturday and possibly undermining the US-backed campaign against al-Qaida and the Taliban.

Islamabad also announced on Friday it was recalling all military forces to the aftermath of last month's terrorist attack on the Indian financial capital of Mumbai.

India has blamed Pakistani militants for the terrifying three-day siege. PAKISTAN has demanded that India back this up with better evidence.

Pakistan's decision to move very seen as a warning that it would retaliate if India launched air or missile strikes against militant targets on Pakistani soil—rather than as an indication that a fourth war was imminent between the two countries.

Tensions have been high since trying to ease the burgeoning crisis while also pressing Pakistan to crack down on militants that Washington says were likely responsible for the Mumbai attacks. The siege left 164 people dead after gunmen targeted 10 sites including two five-star hotels and a Jewish center.

"This is a serious blow to the war on terror in the sense that the whole focus is now shifting toward the eastern border," said Talat Masood, a former general and military analyst. "It will give a tremendous boost to the militants and increased space to operate." AP

WORLDBRIEFS

18 die in Baghdad car bomb

BAGHDAD—The US military on Saturday said a bomb killed at least 18 people and wounded 26 in a busy Baghdad square. Initial Iraqi police reports of the blast at al-Zaraa square in the northern Baghdad district of Kadhimiyah said the explosion was caused by a remote control. But three Iraqi police officers later said it was a suicide car bomb, apparently targeting a taxi stand. Initial US military reports indicated it was a car bomb. AP

Snow, ice blanket US Midwest

RENO, Nevada—Yet another snowstorm is pummeled parts of the American West on Friday, snarling post-holiday traffic and darkening lights on a Christmas tree in Reno, and bringing snow and ice to the Midwest with a dangerous onset of ice. Winter storm warnings were issued on Friday for parts of Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Wyoming, Montana and the Dakotas, and a blizzard warning was in effect for the mountains of southwest Colorado. "It's going to be a taste of a storm," said Chris Cuzzo, senior forecaster for the National Weather Service in Grand Junction, Colorado. AP

Mexico beauty pageants probed

MEXICO CITY—Mexican congressmen called for a federal investigation of potential drug cartel ties to the nation's beauty pageants on Friday after a 20-year-old beauty queen was arrested on suspicion of drug and weapons violations. Congressional leaders warned that cartels may have infiltrated contests to launder money, and said a full investigation was needed. In many, former president Vicente Fox's daughter, Ana Cristina Fox, and Miss Nicaragua in the drug-plagued southern state's annual beauty contest were also involved in ethics in Mexico. "It is very sad. What we are seeing is a loss of values among young people," said Rep. Juan Francisco Rivera, who heads the congressional public safety committee. "There should be an investigation to get to the bottom of this, and make sure it [the pageant] is not linked to some type of crime." AP

Whalers pelted with stink bombs

HONG KONG—Militant environmentalists said they had pelted stink bombs at a Japanese whaling ship in Australian waters in their latest bid to disrupt hunting of the protected creatures. The Sea Shepherd Conservation Society said it "pursued and delivered 13 bottles of rotten butter and 15 bottles of a methyl cellulose and indelible dye mixture" to the Kaiko Maru vessel on Friday evening. A Japanese government-backed whaling body claimed that the activists' ship rammed into the left side of the Japanese vessel, damaging a lifeboat. AP

Pakistanis mark first anniversary of Bhutto's death

GARHI KHUDA BAKSH, PAKISTAN—More than 150,000 Pakistanis flocked to the mausoleum of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto on Saturday after walked hundreds of kilometers to offer flowers and kiss her grave on the first anniversary of her assassination.

Some mourners beat their heads and chests and wailing. Several burst into tears.

"I was taking three flowers to take home and will show my daughters this gift," said 41-year-old Ghulam Sarwar.

Bhutto was killed in a gun and suicide bomb attack on Dec. 27, 2007, as she was leaving a rally in the garrison town of Rawalpindi, just outside the capital of Islamabad.

She was campaigning to return her Pakistan People's Party to power in parliamentary elections, a scenario supported by the United States, which admired her pro-Western views.

Her assassination shocked the world, fanning revulsion at rising militant violence in Pakistan as well as conspiracy theories that the country's powerful spy agencies were involved.

Her widower, Asif Ali Zardari, took over Bhutto's party after her death and was elected president in September, facing a crushing economic crisis and soaring violence by militants also blamed for attacks on US and Nato forces in Afghanistan.

The country of 160 million is now facing a fresh crisis triggered by last month's militant attacks on Mumbai, which India has blamed on Pakistani militants.

"She gave a voice to the people, gave a voice to the downtrodden, the poor and the laborers," Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani said in a televised speech. "She was a hope for the people of this country, she was a hope for this region."

Her widower, 53, was among many supporters who trekked hundreds of kilometers to pay respects. AP

SUPPORTERS recite verses from the Koran near Bhutto's mausoleum.

French investor lost everything in Madoff scam

PARIS—JEAN-THIERRY MAZON DE LA Villehuchet saw his fortune and his loved ones' money disappear along with his clients' when he lost $1.4 billion he had invested with Bernard Madoff, the French financier's brother said.

Mazon de la Villehuchet, 65, was found dead at his desk in New York on Tuesday, both of his wrists slashed and a bottle of pills nearby.

His brother said Mazon de La Villehuchet invested virtually all his own funds, along with money from friends and family, with Madoff, who was arrested Dec. 11 and allegedly told FBI agents he had masterminded a $50 billion fraud.

Mazon de la Villehuchet "invested his own fortune," up to several tens of millions of dollars, his brother Bertrand Mazon de la Villehuchet told The Associated Press on Friday.

"He was totally ruined," and so was his business partner Patrick Litvyn, Bertrand said in a telephone interview from his home on Paris' elite Place des Vosges.

"At first he thought he'd be able to get the money back. He was very disorganized. Gradually he realized he wouldn't be able to," Bertrand said.

As said earlier, the younger Mazon de la Villehuchet had begun investing with Madoff "three or four years ago," his brother said.

"He trusted Madoff completely," Bertrand said. The two men had been introduced by Litvyn, Bene-Thierry's partner in the hotel he ran. Bene-Thierry earned the money he placed with Madoff from friends and family, including his brother.

Bertrand said he had lost 20 percent of his savings in the crisis, which he said was much less than what his brother lost.

Contrary to what some analysts say now, Bertrand said the returns on his investment with Madoff were not too good to be true. "Over four years, my gain was 17 percent, that's not crazy," he said.

The Frenchman's fund was among the biggest losers in the Madoff fraud, and one of a handful to get taken for more than $1 billion. AP

The WORLD

Editor Lawrence B. Quirico

Burns foiled mass killer's bid to flee US

COVINA, CALIFORNIA—A MAN WHO CARRIED out a Christmas Eve massacre and arson dressed as Santa at the home of his former in-laws apparently intended to flee the United States, but his plans were dashed after the inferno he created severely burned his arms and melted his red costume onto his body, police said.

Bruce Jeffrey Pardo, a fired-off newspaper worker, apparently shot some of his nine victims execution-style in a plot to destroy his ex-wife's family after a costly divorce that was finalized last week.

He had an airline ticket for a Christmas morning flight to Canada and $17,000 in cash on his body, some attached to his legs with plastic wrap and some in a girdle, Covina Police Chief Kim Raney said on Friday.

Armed with four guns, wearing the Santa suit and carrying a fuel-spraying device wrapped like a present, Pardo showed up at the home at 11:30 p.m. Wednesday as a party of about 25 people was under way.

Raney said Pardo, 45, fired a shot into the face of an 8-year-old girl who answered the door, then apparently targeted relatives of his ex-wife as other guests fled.

"There's some information that he stood over them and shot them execution-style," Raney said.

Pardo screamed in the front door and retrieved a device that mixed useless diesel as an oxygen with high-octane racing fuel, police said. Pleasing guests saw him spraying the fuel inside the house when the vapor was ignited, possibly by a pilot light or a candle, and exploded.

"Bill, Pardo was severely injured during that explosion," Raney said. "He suffered third-degree burns on both arms and it also appears that the Santa Claus suit that he was wearing did melt onto his body."

Pardo was able to drive to his brother's home in the Sylmar area of Los Angeles, broke in and shot himself in the head. His brother discovered the body early Thursday.

Before the suicide, Pardo used remnants of the blaze suit to booby-trap his rental car to explode, according to Raney. The device went off as a bomb squad worked to disarm it on Thursday, but no one was hurt.

Police said Pardo had no criminal record or history of violence, and neighbors and others knew him as a friendly man who walked his dog and was a volunteer usher at his parish church.

The fire that razed the home was so intense that none of the bodies have been identified because of charring. Police declined to say whether Pardo's ex-wife and her parents were among the dead, but said they were unaccounted for.

When the fire was extinguished early Thursday, officers found three charred bodies in the living room area. Investigators found five more bodies amid the ashes later in the day. A ninth body was found on Friday morning.

A search of Pardo's own home in Altadena, a suburb northeast of Los Angeles, turned up racing fuel, five empty boxes for high-powered ammunition, handguns and two high-powered shotguns.

Court records show Pardo's estranged wife, Sylvia Pardo, 42, filed for a dissolution of marriage on March 28, 2008, and the couple were legally separated after about two years of marriage.

Bruce Pardo used his wife's $150,000 as part of the Dec. 16 settlement, according to court documents that detailed a bitter split. He also lost a dog he shared with her. The couple had no children together.

Bruce Pardo had been employed at ITT Electronic Systems, Radar Systems, from February 2003 to July 2008. Since Pardo's attorney said his client had trouble making the support payments after he lost his job, he never showed any anger or instability. AP

PARDO: His history of violence

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NINE people were killed execution-style and several others were wounded inside this California home (upper photo) that Pardo set on fire with a makeshift gas dispenser (left photo).

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Business Features Editor Margie Quiniquin Espino

Sunday BIZ

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He runs not just in his dreams /B3

A LEADER'S WAY

John C. Maxwell

Runaway finds his 'gold' in duck eggs /B4

Christmas tidings at BSP

By Doris C. Dantes

DECKING THE HALLS and rooms with Christmas decor is a sacred tradition at the Intagliolo botanical in Pilipinas, with its upward-up building on Roxas Boulevard a rare fireside eye-catcher.

And the tradition goes on despite the Abbycat economic controversy because "there's much to be thankful for and so much more to be hopeful of," said BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. during the recent BSP Christmas lighting ceremony.

The beauty also comes from the inside, Libreth.

The office of BSP member Nelly Doris Villafuerte at the 5th floor Monetary Board or MB tree, for instance, proves that the office interiors environment into a portrait-perfect Christmas showcase at this time of the year.

For the second year in a row, Villafuerte's office has turned into a Christmas lovers' attraction at the central bank.

After adopting a Winter Wonderland theme last year, Villafuerte this year turned to the traditional red Christmas motif to create an extraordinary Yuletide showcase.

A hundredth enthusiast and former reporter and Radio undersecretary, Villafuerte says she adopted the motif to inspire a festive mood and thus help uplift people's spirits given the very challenging environment.

A pair of mini Santa Claus figures, one on a sled and another leisurely seated on a wooden stool, stands like a concierge at the doorstep of Villafuerte's office.

They are just tokens to the Christmas spirit that abounds in the office, which is filled with Christmas trees, lights, ornaments, and other Christmas decorations.

THE FOUR-TIGGED creatures in Tetangco's office

BSP celebrates Christmas in good times and bad

A NUN shows Santa Claus figures stands at the doorstep

BOOM with a merry time

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People, Events & Products

Editor Aries Espinosa

Metrobank launches 24/7 customer assistance

METROPOLITAN BANK & TRUST COMPANY (Metrobank) announces its new 24-Hour Customer Assistance hotline to serve its clients better. Metro Manila and overseas clients may call 8405-HOME (8405-4663) while local provincial account holders may use the domestic toll free number 1-800-10-8405-HOME.

Through the hotline, clients can inquire about their ATM, e-Banking, and remittance concerns. Customers can report ATM cards that were lost or stolen, defective, rejected, or captured by the teller machine, or inquire about the Bank's electronic banking services, namely: Metrobankdirect Internet Banking facility, Mobile Banking, and Metrophone Banking.

OFWs and their beneficiaries can also call about remittances received as well as the Bank's remittance products and services, prices and fees, and convenient foreign office networks.

The launch of the new numbers is expected to benefit Metrobank clients especially during the long holidays.

The Bank had earlier announced that close to 300 selected branches nationwide will be open to serve the banking public during the long holiday break from Dec. 23, 2009 to Jan. 1, 2010.

Selected Metrobank branches will be open on Dec. 26, 27, 30, 31, and Jan. 1, 2009, with all of its branches open on Dec. 29 Dec. 24 is a regular banking day.

For more details, visit your branch of account, or call 8405-8000. Log on to www.metrobank.com.ph.

RP IN FREE TRADE DISCUSSIONS

As part of Australia and New Zealand's efforts to bolster this proposed Free Trade Agreement with this Asean, the two nations invited Philippine Trade Ambassador Mely Rongcon to provide her evaluation of the planned alliance. Ambassador Rongcon (left) is pix of the Harold Business Club. Being on hand is the Australian capital of Canberra, where she was recently received by Daniel Spencer, Deputy Secretary of Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Australia. (File photo)

Australian business and government leaders, Rongcon said (on time to Wellington in New Zealand, where they met Phil Goff, Minister of Trade of New Zealand for a round of "full-fat dialogue." Talking into account the latest national growth after mentioning the Philippines' economy ranked as the thirty-agriculture, mining and textile industries, Rongcon concluded that the free trade agreement will be a great step in strengthening the local economies. (Shown, from left, are Rongcon, Goff and Lim.

Energizer's longer lasting Christmas

EXERCISE YOUR CHRISTMAS WITH gifts that can be enjoyed even after the Yuletide season. Treat your friends and relatives to clever and practical gifts they can use anywhere, anytime, especially on occasions where they need portable power most.

Energizer, the world's number one rechargeable brand, serves up a bevy of gift ideas to satisfy your tech-savvy loved ones. Using the state-of-the-art technology, these Energizer power solutions will allow them to enjoy their favorite gadgets longer and to their full potential.

Power gifts

Nothing is more frustrating than a cell phone conking out in the middle of an important client call or heart-to-heart talk. Spare your loved ones the grief and hassle of these inopportune moments. Give the gift of Energizer Energy To Go, an instant cell phone charger that provides fast, long-lasting charging power for your mobile phone.

Unlike a conventional cell phone charger that needs to be plugged into an electrical outlet, this lightweight, roundish, portable gadget is powered by AA batteries so you can charge virtually anywhere. Charge up at the beach, while commuting or in the boondocks. Energizer Energy To Go is equipped with power conversion technology that optimizes performance so you can get the most energy out of every charge. It also comes with a patented intelligent control chip that maximizes power transfer from the charger to your cell phone.

Energizer Energy To Go allows users to talk while charging within 30 seconds of activation. It fits most cell phones brands like Nokia, Sony Ericsson, Samsung and LG and comes ready to use with one Energizer e2 Advanced AA batteries. With Energizer Energy To Go, your dad or brother can bring his cell phone back in life so he can easily continue where he left off.

Batteries are truly indispensable for avid users of digital cameras and other portable devices. Make sure your short and long distance buddies can always keep in touch by giving them Energizer Rechargeable batteries. Energizer Rechargeable and Energizer Max.

Treat your Energizer's roster of battery chargers to deliver quick and full charging needs in as fast as 15 minutes. Energizer Recharge Value accepts AA and AAA rechargeable batteries and has an automatic switch-off function for hands-free charging. It also comes with four AA Energizer rechargeable batteries so your loved one won't have extra picture perfect moments on his or her digital camera.

Then there's the ever reliable and long lasting Energizer Max, whether batteries that can keep up with your family's portable power needs. Use it to power your son's hand-me-toy helicopter or your daughter's interactive teddy bear. Let them enjoy their Christmas presents right away with Energizer Max.

As this Christmas, give your mom more time on the phone with your beau or she cares on her cell phone. Let your best friend's handheld game console go the extra mile. Or power up your newest high-tech gadget in a snap. Treat yourself and your loved ones to portable power that lasts longer and keeps on giving with Energizer Energy To Go, Energizer Rechargeable and Energizer Max.

HOME HEALTH CARE TEAM WITH SENIOR ADVOCATE

The Home Health Care team poses with top senior specialist Sen. Edgardo Angara during the recent Philippine Society of Geriatric Medicine convention. Above, from left, senior citizen Sen. Lito Lapid, geriatric program director Dr. Doris Bautista, Emirates hostess Rhonda and Tess Rubico-Jones.

Health Care is another quality medical service where seniors and their families can avail. The senior residential facility has also recently been opened in Quezon City. For more inquiries, call 920-1600, e-mail info@homehealthcare.com.ph, or log on to www.homehealthcare.com.ph.

Mobile phones for grabs in Petron promo

LOADING UP ON PETRON Blaze or Petron 3GX in Metro Manila service stations offers motorists the chance to win a Nokia N96 3G DVD mobile phone in Petron's "High Octane Jumpkat" promo, which runs until Jan. 31.

A single receipt fuel purchase worth P500 at either Petron 3GX or Petron Blaze gives customers one entry in the grand raffle draw scheduled for Feb. 3, 2009. At the same time, every P1,000 single receipt fuel purchase at these high-octane fuels entitles the customers to instant to grab a prize at the Petron service station for a chance to win Petron premium items and giveaways.

Both high-octane, high-quality fuels, Petron Blaze and Petron 3GX maintain a car's readiness for superior performance on the road. Petron Blaze's 96-octane rating is the highest in the market, resulting in a highly refined fuel that promotes cleaner emissions and power for improved performance, fully maximizing your vehicle's combustion process. Rated at 95-octane, Petron 3GX Complete Combustion System allows ultrafine detergents that clean an engine of unwanted carbon deposits, thereby also maximizing a car's combustion and power for better vehicle performance.

To enter the "High Octane Jumpkat" promo, Petron 3GX users should send an SMS to 2600 as follows: PETRON 3GX<SPACE>RECEIPT#<SPACE>AMOUNT. Petron Blaze buyers should submit the following SMS entry: PETRON BLZ<SPACE>RECEIPT #<SPACE>AMOUNT. Standard text messaging fees apply. Visit your nearest Petron service station for more details.

POA president elected

FILE

DR. JOSE S. PUNZ, JR. was elected as the 2009 president of the Philippine Orthopedic Association (POA) at the recently concluded POA Annual Convention held at Sofitel Hotel in Manila. The other officers are: Dra Lucia B. Bautista (vice president), Albert Y. Uy Jr (secretary) and Endimon B. Tolibano (treasurer). The 2009 Board of Trustees are: Drs Geoffrey R. Bautista, Alden R. Quidlat, Aylyn S. Aguilos, Edward SM Wong, Jose Javier J. Sienko (Luzon representatives), Anthony C. Rho (Visayas representative), Richard John C. Sicuan (Mindanao representative) and Francisco F. Abaya (ex-officio).

Punzalan is a graduate of the UP College of Medicine, Class of 1990. He finished his orthopedic residency in 1994 at the Philippine Orthopedic Center. He focuses his practice on total joint replacement, shoulder and spine after numerous training fellowships abroad. In 1995, he trained with Dr. Kenjiro Nobuhara for shoulder at the Nobuhara Hospital in Japan, under Dr. Ramon S. Gustilo for joint replacement at Hennepin County Medical Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota (1996-97). He subspecialized further in spine and joint replacement at Oxford University (1998).

The Philippine Orthopedic Association celebrates its 50th years of existence on 2009. Year-long events will culminate in a 4-in-1 international symposium at the Echo Shangri-la Hotel from Nov. 9 to 14, 2009.

DOH AIMS FOR RABIES-FREE RP BY 2020

The Department of Health, together with the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Animal Industry, Animal Welfare Coalition and other animal welfare/human welfare advocates for the country's observance of World Rabies Day held recently in provinces public awareness on rabies prevention. Its support of the DOH-PA goal of making the Philippines rabies-free by 2020 are (from left) Dr. Yasmin Bayan, Dr. Rafael Guino, Dr. Jaime Galvez Tan, Dr. Eric Tayag, Dr. Gloria Balboa, Dr. Ma. Victoria Belmonte, Dr. Ma. Lourdes Bautista, Dr. Ma. Lourdes Lopez, Dr. Ma. Lourdes Lopez, Dr. Ma. Lourdes Lopez

He runs not just in his dreams

WHEN RICK HUNT WAS born in 1962, his parents presumed the typical routine expectations of first-time parents. But then they discovered that during Rick's birth, his umbilical cord had wrapped around his neck, restricting all the oxygen to his brain. Later, Rick was diagnosed with cerebral palsy.

"When he was 8 months old," his father, Bob, remembers, "the doctors told us we should put him away—he'd be a vegetable all his life." But the Hunts parents wouldn't do that.

They were determined to raise him like any other child.

An uphill battle

Downtown that was tough. Rick is a spastic/plegic who can't walk without "scissoring" his legs because of his tendency to spasticity.

Bob's parents worked with him, teaching him everything they could and include him in family activities.

When Rick was 10, his life changed when engineers from Tufts University created a device that enabled him to communicate via computer. The first words he slowly and painstakingly punched out were, "Go Patriots." That's when the family, who had been following the Willis Boston Bruins to the playoffs, found our Rick was a sports fan.

In 1975, after a long battle, the family was finally able to get Rick into public school, where he enrolled despite his physical limitations. Rick's world was changing. It changed even more two years later.

When Rick found out that a fund-raising Walkathon was underway just so to help a young athlete who had been paralyzed in an accident, he told his father he wanted to participate.

Rick, then a 14-year-old, in the Jimmy Fund Walk, was in his late 30s and out of shape. But he agreed to run and push his son in a modified racing chair.

A LEADER'S WAY

John C. Maxwell

When they crossed the finish line—second to last—Dick recalls, Rick flashed "the biggest smile you ever saw in your life." After the race, Rick wrote out this simple message: "Dad, I felt like I wasn't handicapped." After that day, their lives would never be the same again."

Working together

What does a father do when his son, who has never been out of a wheelchair, says that he loves to race? He becomes his boy's hands and feet. That's the day "Team Hoyt" was born. Dick got Rick a more sophisticated racing chair.

Then the quadriplegic teenager and the out-of-shape dad began running together—and not just casually.

Before long, their training became more serious, and in 1981, they ran in their first Boston Marathon together. Since then, they haven't missed a Boston Marathon in 29 years.

After four years of running marathons, the two decided that they were ready for another challenge: Triathlons, events which combine swimming, cycling and running. That was no small challenge, especially because Rick would have to learn how to swim! But he did.

Dick explained, "He's the one who motivated me because if it weren't for him, I wouldn't be out there competing. What I'm doing is using Rick my arms and legs to be can be out there competing like everybody else."

Of all the races in the world, ours is considered the toughest—the Ironman Triathlon in Hawaii. The race consists of three back-to-back legs: A 2.4-mile swim, a 112-mile bike race and a full marathon run of 26.2 miles. It's an exhausting test of stamina for any individual. In 1989, Dick and Rick competed in the race together for the swimming portion, Dick towed a small boat with Rick in it. Then he biked for the 112 miles with Rick in a seat on his bicycle's handlebars. By the time they got to the running leg, Dick was exhausted.

But all Dick had to do was think of the words of his son: When I'm running, my disability seems to disappear. It is the only place where truly I feel as an equal. Due to all the positive feedback, I do not feel handicapped at all. Rather, I feel that I am the intelligent person that I am with no limits.

And of course, Gary finished the race—in a strong time of 13 hours and 43 minutes.

Still competing

Since then, Rick has earned his college degree, and he works at Boston University helping to design computer systems for people with disabilities. And, of course, he still competes. Rick's father, who is now over 60 years old and retired.

As of March 2008, Team Hoyt had completed a total of 731 races. They've won 31 marathons and 130 triathlons, including four races at Ironman distances. And they still keep running.

"There is nothing in the world that the both of us can't conquer together," says Dick. They love out the finish line a dream—and a team—can take you anywhere.

(Adapted from John Maxwell's Developing The Leader Within You Workshop on Jan. 27-28, 2009 at the John Hay People Lab Hotel, Call Inspire Leadership Center). email: inspire@leadership.com.ph

FEATURES IN BRIEF

Peza makes Hijo an ecozone

THE PHILIPPINE ECONOMIC ZONE AUTHORITY (Peza) has signed an agreement declaring the Hijo Resources Corp. (Hijo) Special Economic Zone.

The 64-hectare estate in Tagum City, Davao Del Norte boasts of a private port. With a depth of 15 meters, it is the deepest port in the Davao Gulf. Hijo is the only private non-IT Special Economic Zone in Mindanao.

The Hijo Special Economic Zone is ideal for agro-based business requiring raw materials such as cassavas, bananas and other agricultural products. The Hijo Special Economic Zone is also ideal for non-agro locators that are labor-intensive and service-oriented, and those targeting the Southern Mindanao and the BIMP-Eaga markets.

Sale Medicines Network up

TEN PHARMACEUTICAL AND INDUSTRY ORGANIZATIONS from the healthcare sector have formed a multistakeholder alliance with the recent launch of the Safe Medicines Network (SafeNet).

The highlight of the event was the signing of a memorandum of agreement by officials of the Association of Medical Representatives, (AMA). Ayos na Botika! sa Mediksyang Presyo (Agap) Coalition, Employers Association of the Philippines (EMAP), MediExpress, Mercury Drug Corp., Pharmaceutical and Healthcare Association of the Philippines (PHAP), Philippine Association of Pharmacists in the Pharmaceutical Industry (Paapi), Philippine Chamber of the Pharmaceutical Industry (PCPI), Philippine Hospitals Association (PHA), Philippine Pharmacists Association (PPhA) and Private Hospitals Association of the Philippines (PHAP).

RFM gets halal certification

FOOD AND BEVERAGE FIRM RFM CORP HAS received halal certification for its ready-to-fill certified meat processing plant in the country, paving the way for supplying its Swift meat products such as hotdogs or frankfurters and sausages to the Muslim consumer market, estimated at over 1.2 billion Muslims around the world.

In a disclosure, RFM president and CEO Jose M. Concepcion III said the RFM meat plant in Calamba, Laguna has been awarded halal certification by the Islamic Da'Wah Council of the Philippines (ICDP). The only halal certifying body in the country recognized by the World Halal Council.

"Halal" is an Arabic term meaning "permissible." In food, it means those products that do not contain any prohibited substances and have been prepared and processed in accordance with strict standards for purity, sanitation and quality.

RFM is currently celebrating its 50th year as a producer of a wide range of food and beverage products, including chilled meat products under the Swift brand.

All-Batangueño cooperative in Bicol town helps hike farm yield

By Juan Escandor Jr.
inquirer Southern Luzon

CALAMBA, LAMARES SUR—Members of a cooperative here, established in 1998 to meet the needs of cultivators, have a common denominator: They are descendants of Batangas folk who emigrated to this town after the war.

Mariano P. de Villa, a farm cultivation and mechanical engineer by profession, said he learned from his folks that in the years after World War II, many Batangueños migrated to Bicol because farmlands here were cheaper.

He remembered how, when he was young, Batangueño was the dominant dialect among the residents of Barangay Magsaysay here.

To pay back the community that adopted them, De Villa said, they established an all-Batangueño co-op named Samahan Ong Pagpamahal ng Mamamayan at Sibol ng Kabuhayan (Kapamasa ng mga Batangueño sa Camarines Sur) Multipurpose Cooperative.

Kabucan started as a small-scale planters association of Batangueños.

The group later became the local chapter of the Kapisanan ng mga Batangueño (Kapibal).

But the Kapibal chapter, which they later named Kabucan, became inactive for awhile.

They revived and converted it into a co-op with 16 original members.

De Villa, current Kabucan president, said membership grew in '73, but they are not yet ready to open Kabucan to non-Batangueños, even though membership now included those married to Batangueños or Batangueñas, and those from Quezon provinces now living here.

Ten years more to reunion, the Kabucan now provides for the production needs of its members.

The original mission of the co-op was a store, which started with a P50,000 capital. It has grown to a P500,000 enterprise that now sells spare parts for rice mills and farm implements, among others. It also provides basic commodities, which a member can lease from the coop.

Dairy venture

De Villa said they entered into a contract with Land O' Lakes (LOL) to supply fresh milk everyday on its processing plant in Pili, Camarines Sur.

The LOL is a US-based agribusiness group that, since 2006, has engaged in a milk-feeding program for public schools in Camarines Sur through local government units.

Kabucan provided three milking cows in selling Kabucan members.

The members paid in cash or in kind the price per head of P90,000. The heifers were delivered to them in 2008.

Their payment in kind came in the form of a 2-year-old pregnant cow or carabao of the same breed.

At present, De Villa said, there are some 40 milking cows dispersed to members.

COOPERATIVE dairy farmers examine clean, hygienic stalls and pasture area for the cows to ensure the safety of the milk products.

Carmelito Reyes, a Kabucan member, said LOL buys the milk at P28 a liter and sells it at P50 a liter.

De Villa revealed that the recognition of their co-op as a producer of dairy products.

He said there are only seven groups or entities, including Kabucan, in Bicol recognized by the National Dairy Authority.

The co-op operates under the organization of a regional alliance because the contract with the LOL required the organization of a federation of milk producers before the milk production project could be transferred to their name.

The LOL requires at least 15 member-cooperatives to form a co-op federation.

Cost efficiency

But they have only seven milk producers, as they registered the organization ahead with the Securities and Exchange Commission in Bicol Dairy Alliance, which will host a Wednesday Dairy Congress in May 2009.

De Villa said they acquired a tractor this year, which would make their work in the farm faster, enabling them to save from the high cost of preparing land for traditional crop.

They got the tractor for P2.5 million, with a counterpart fund from the Department of Agriculture.

De Villa said the tractor's running service save of P1,200 an hour, inclusive of the operator and fuel. Just theoretically, see the cost of hired preparation compared to employing a carabao and a laborer.

Manuel Au, a member who cultivates a 3-hectare area farm, said he spent only P1,800 for the hired preparation of his farm. He estimated that he could have spent P3,000 just to borrow the farm if he employed a carabao and a laborer.

De Villa stressed that, before getting the tractor, the area cultivation here would rear on manure from other towns.

This would depend on the availability of the equipment.

He said they would schedule the use of the tractor among co-op members on a first come, first served basis even so, he said, they also accommodate requests from non-members within their places and in neighboring villages as a way of service to the community.

De Villa also showed a corn sheller machine that processes tons of corn into grains. A member pays P5 per sack for the service.

He said the Kabucan regularly distributes to their members purchases refund and interest on capital every year.

To respond to the immediate financial needs of the members, the Kabucan also offers provident and emergency loans without interest.

It is planning to build an artificial grass diner next year and look forward to have its own building that would serve as its office.

Christmas tidings at BSP

To next page B2

tree wonders inside.

Another fauna and a passed-up reindeer adorn the doorway to her main workplace.

This main workplace is the highlight—a stunning array of central Christmas trees, spires, boughs, bells and gift boxes. A few high-leveled silver glitters are also incorporated, giving the Palestido dioramas the flavor of a fairy tale.

BSP Deputy Governor Diwa Guinigundo's office next to Villahermosa's is an epitome of sheer fun. The five tiny cone-topped creatures that grace the reception desk never fail to bring out the child inside every citizen.

Apple, Guinigundo's dresser aide and de facto interior designer, made sure that the Christmas spirit is alive in this office.

Meanwhile, the centerpiece in Tetangco's office as the other end of the BSP row is a lovely tall sapphire-and-silver Christmas tree that seems to pay homage to the win of Ateneo's senior basketball team during the UAAP competition.

Meanwhile, the BSP's Christmas display on Roxas Boulevard, of course, is as festive as it is outstanding.

This year it pays tribute to millions of overseas Filipinos who work miles away from their families to keep their local households, and the entire Christmas economy, afloat.

The BSP's Christmas display's one more proof that there's no stopping Christmas, in good times or bad.

VILLAPURATE'S office turns into a tourist attraction every Christmas.

HIGH-HEELED: One piece gives the Palestido dioramas a fairytale look there.

Sunday BIZ

ISAURO Recongco Sr. pioneered Recongco's balut, hatchery and salted-egg making in Barangay Tibcuj, Oas, Albay.

Runaway finds 'gold' in duck eggs

Text and photos by Gina V. Rodriguez
Inquirer Southern Luzon

OAS, ALBAY—Isauro Recongco Sr. likes to say that the balut industry would not have flourished in this town had he not decided at the age of 12 to leave the family farm in this town for Metro Manila where he discovered. Patience and learned the trade of balut-making.

The second to the youngest of seven children of farmer-parents, he said it was difficult seeing how his mother had worked so hard in the fields.

She started work as early as 4 a.m. and yet would still be up until late in the evening doing housekeeping chores for the family.

"So I ran away from home and tried to discover better opportunities in Manila," he said.

ISAURO Recongco Jr. beside the automated duck egg processing and fuel boilery equipment provided by the DOST.

Thriving industry

The years 1963 to 1968 found him immersed in scores of households in Pateros where he observed firsthand a thriving backyard industry consisting of duck raising and the incubation of fertilized duck eggs to produce balut.

When he got married in 1970 and returned to his hometown, he initially worked at the Philippine Iron Mines in Camarines Norte.

It was not until 1986 when work options in the mines shuttered that he took to heart what his wife said: "Didn't you tell me when you were courting me that you knew how to make balut?"

Thanks to the knowledge, which he said was already "programmed" in his mind because of his exposure in Pateros, he embarked on a venture that would be eventually be carried on by two of his four children and their families.

Duck eggs

His sons Isauro, 37, and Joshua, 35, and their wives take care of all aspects of the enterprise known as Recongco's balutan, hatchery and "ilog sa asinan" making that involve the processing of duck eggs into balut, penoy and ilog sa asinan or salted eggs.

There were a week, they buy a minimum of 30,000 fresh duck eggs at P4.20 a piece from suppliers coming from duck farms in Oas, Pili, in Camarines Sur and Sorsogon.

Sometimes, when demand is good, they would source from suppliers from as far as Masbate and Samar provinces.

Duck eggs are incubated for 13-14 days in cylindrical containers filled with rice husk to produce balut.

Other eggs are simply boiled to produce penoy.

Market days

Then, another batch of duck eggs is salted and processed for 15 days to become salted eggs.

Every week, the brothers distribute the eggs to various towns in Albay as well as in Sorsogon City and parts of Camarines Sur.

Tuesdays find them in Legazpi City; Wednesdays, Sorsogon City; Thursdays, Pili, Camarines Sur, and the towns of Polangui and Libon in Albay; Fridays, Oas and Ligao; Saturdays, Tabaco City and Daraga; and Sundays, Legazpi City and Sorsogon City.

On each market day, the brothers release a total of 6,000 to 8,000 eggs or 2,000 to 3,000 pieces of each kind (balut, penoy and maalat) to retailers or consignees, with penoy pegged at P4 per piece, balut, P7.50 to P8 and maalat, P6.

EACH week, at least 30,000 duck eggs fill the warehouse of the Recongco family.

Setup

About three years ago, brothers Isauro and Joshua benefited from an assistance given by the Department of Science and Technology's Small Enterprise Technology Upgrading Program (Setup).

The brothers acquired a P120,000 loan from the program, which helped them get equipment they need to systematize production and ease the laborious process, especially in the incubation of the duck eggs.

The automated duck egg processing and fuel boilery equipment and generator is located in their production area near warehouse near the family home in this town.

With the new equipment, the good quality of the family's egg products is ensured because the manufacturing process is enhanced.

And as sales roll in, the family is able to pay back the loan at P3,000 to P5,000 a month.

Confidence

Isauro Sr. has no doubt that through the hard work of his sons and their wives, they will fully pay back the loan.

He has reason to be confident as over the last 20 years, the trade he started has helped his family acquire their own pieces of property—a house and lot, pedicabs, a house-cum-warehouse and a light truck for delivery of the eggs to the marketplaces.

"I do think that I was just living in a house made of nipa when I started raising my family," Isauro Sr. said.

He was also able to put two other children in school—one is now working in Tabaco after completing a computer science course while another is a fourth year college student taking up mechanical engineering.

He believes that in time, his grandchildren will take their turn at reaping the benefits of the successful enterprise he started all those years ago.

A LOAN from DOST's Setup helped the family acquire equipment to systematize production.

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JOB Market

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Sunday LIFESTYLE
Editor Thelma Sioson San Juan

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How an heiress tries to make a difference

SOFIA Zobel- Elizalde with husband Paul Elizalde on Philippine Tatler cover, photo by Denise Weldon

Yes, we can—Sofia is an example of what a Filipino did in 2008

By Marge Enriquez
Correspondent

WITH DWINDLING audiences and patronage, the performing arts seem to be groping for breath. But young benefactors like Sofia Zobel-Elizalde, 40, are throwing a life raft, particularly to the world of dance.

She belongs to the new breed of patrons who are making a difference in the lives of talented performers. Her natural leadership, drive to succeed and generosity of spirit make her the perfect cover material for the December issue of Philippine Tatler.

She was photographed by Denise Weldon-Wilhelm whose photographs she has a collection of. It was shot in her cave residence designed by Arcon Ay's firm and decorated by Vida Johnson.

Sofia started training at Ballet Philippines (BP), then tended to London where her father Jaime Zobel de Ayala, was ambassador to the Court of St. James. She returned to BP as one of its strong soloists and did such memorable roles as the dramatic Carmen to the austere ballet of the same name, and the ingenious Myrtha in "Giselle."

When her parents left the BP board, the spirit the company to pursue a college degree and start a family. She married her childhood sweetheart, dashing businessman Dean Elizalde, and became a devoted mother to Patchi, Ilea and Cristina.

She established Steps Dance Studio which has been a benchmark for high-quality dance education. Between resolving dance and family life, she would be involved in other civic projects or play the quintessential hostess to her homes.

As board member of BP, Sofia is set to raise audience interest by hiring two birds with one stone. Or, the husband, BP possesses ballet premises at Greenbelt 3 to tap a new audience. On the other, she reviewed the environment of opening nights, particularly the glamorous black-tie gala to launch the season. She used her connections and charisma to raise funds for the productions.

Coming from a family of philanthropists and art lovers, Sofia has organized a foundation for dance scholars at Steps Studio, his kept street boys away from trouble by getting them into ballet, and has used her personal funds to send dancers for jobs overseas. Many dancers abroad owe their careers to her generosity of spirit.

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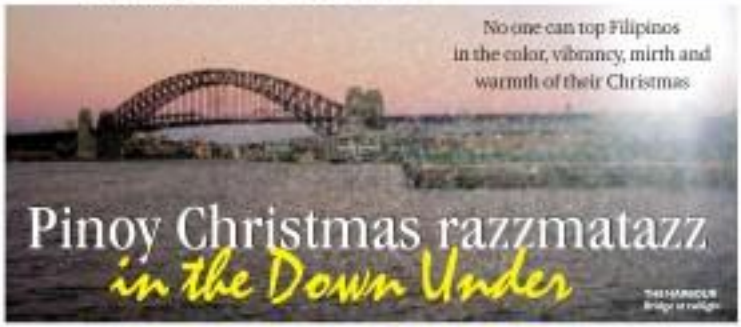


No one can top Filipinos in the color, vibrancy, mirth and warmth of their Christmas

Pinoy Christmas razzmatazz in the Down Under

THE HANGOUT/ Bridge at twilight

Text and photos by Corazon C. Tejero

IMAGINE CELEBRATING CHRISTMAS in the dead of summer. Strange?

Not too strange when you consider that while it's chilly in the northern hemisphere, it's exactly the reverse in the Antipodes. As you hear Christmas carols nothing is the air the big right visions.

We learned that from found to Sydney (capital of New South Wales and Australia's most cosmopolitan city) upon invitation by the Department of Tourism to join the Sydney Christmas Parade Nov. 29-Dec. 1.

Here on its second year the event was modeled after Macy's annual parade in New York. Its inaugural was touted by the city council as "the most spectacular public event in the city since the 2000 Sydney Olympics."

It was Singular coincidence when we arrived in the city, the air chilly and the sunlight waning. Autumn was ending somewhere, so in the southern hemisphere the spring was breathing in us, as Christmastime. It would be officially summer which is three years ponks at 30 degrees Celsius.

Tourism campaign

We've noticed that, often when we travel abroad, she would to be stressed or name up. Several is not wearing its own distressing. This time it was the terrorist attack on Manhattan.

Then we learned on Fox News that Danish architect Jorn Utzon, who designed the lyrical Opera House, one of the most recognizable buildings in the world, had last died.

And the Brit, Lieberman Hon. "Sandcastle," starring Jane Mason, Christopher Eccleston and Hugh Jackman, just opened—helping propel the place to No. 1 in the Country Board Index for the third consecutive year.

CDR was designed to "track travel trends and independent opportunities for tourism," thus, finds the Australian Tourist Commission, "perhaps pitching itself as "a place to find yourself." On the Top 10, it is followed by Canada, United States, Italy, Switzerland, France, New Zealand, Britain, Japan and Indonesia—with China, Ireland, Irish Emirates and Greece rounding out the Top 15 listing slots. "To become major tourist destinations in the next five years."

And so to the parade.

The Philippine delegation was headed by Rolando Josper Jr., undersecretary for planning and programming of the department, tourism officers Rex Bustos and Lily Libosada. Fifth three were two cultural groups, the Bayanihan (24 members) and Cebu's Sinanduk (17).

We were welcomed by DOT Sydney at lavish Customs house, and had lunch in the overlooking restaurant of the Sydney Tower (Wk) we had to try the grilled kangaroo meat, which tasted like aged beef.

Country of honor

The next day Nov. 30, a funding it was heartwarming to see twinkling along the streets against the backdrop of Victorian brownstone buildings four-legendary. 12.8-tall papier-mâché giants flown in from Britain, and Cebu Philippines float, a two-story replica of the bahay na bato.

An attendance of the Filipino community to Sydney helped in the preparations.

Josper and Bustos made a quick look see of our 80 member delegation.

"Everyone is a Philippine dream holiday," said Josper, "and we have the largest Delegation in the world."

In this parade, the Philippines was "almost like an honored country," he continued. "Last year, ours was the most popular float. The biggest was the Santa Claus float—well, we could not eclipse that. Ours came second."

We were actually bringing to this event a double-edged sword—because while we were spreading good cheers to the Aussies, we were also trying to lure them to visit our shores.

"This is the kind of thing we'd like to do, so that Australians would launch on your dance and go to the Philippines," said Josper. "We spend six months in preparations, including a series of negotiations, going to the furniture, floor, more and more are learning to spell Philippines with not 1 and two ps. I think that's an achievement."

Josper said Australian tourist arrival was the fastest growing in the Philippines, coming in fourth and with close second standing.

"Going to the Philippines is always an adventure," he explained, "and the Australians love adventure."

Traveling theater

By 11:30 a.m., with the sun soon the zenith, the parade of some 40 float started to wend from Wynyard, through the length of George Street, the lightning of the twenty-two kilometers to Hamburg Park in Darling Harbour.

Participants ranged from Aussie country folk to medieval-era troubadours, from little girls in outrageous tutus to theatre women in mid-traveling flight, fairies Santa Clauses, "Star Wars" characters, fashion in full attire, throwing about all was a menagerie of Mardi's inflated balloons, direct from New York.

Along the way we followed our "traveling theater," the Philippine float considered to "capture the Christmas spirit of a town on Dog from different exciting angles."

The Bayanihan didn't lose their graceful movement and precious smiles despite directing the elephant the Lilliputian coats. But then, they're our national folk-dance company, so that's a given.

FROM top left: Barong-jumpa performers from Cebu; Mary's inflatables lead the Sydney Christmas Parade; Bayanihan dancers dazzle in the dances with the snake poses.

This Kimono group, named after Down City's festival, spontaneously appeared by through vibrant costume and fast-way street dancing.

Waiting for us at Sussex Village in the park were four DOT staffs under the lens, bedecked with parrots and draped with orange and purple flying.

After a packed lunch of quiche Lorraine, tea sweets and meat pies, we immediately watched Aussie kids and teens gamboling onstage in their wintry outfit, furiously dancing and chirruping about holidays on ice and winter-wonderland, all in the summer heat.

We got sandwiched from standing in the open while waiting for the turn of Bayanihan to showcase a Muslim dance, the noisy exploitant, the acrobatic spins of knights and the inevitable coral king.

Shopping and dining

The rest of the afternoon we spent shopping by parasailing, hunting the Sydney Souvenir Storehouse on Liverpool Street for discounted paintings, boomerang, power knots, parrots of vase skin, bath of kangaroo hide, and surrounding Woolworth's area the Town and Country Department Store, Myer, Grace Brothers, bath robes, sandwich meat of crocodile and emu and other exotics.

We even crossed the Industrial Harbour Bridge on a train to the suburbs in search of Chinatown stays for the Golden Inch Dome.

In the evening, at the Chinese cuisine, we were entertained with the Peruvian Inca-pan beef and assorted cuisine from the Great Barrier Reef (there is an enhance more deeply satisfying than the fatty Norwegian pink). Then, at coffee, we contemplated the next spectacular leather in the world.

We Sunday we regrouped once from the locale for our cultural performers, even in the three, to back in our hotel at Wynyard.

We knew we know—so can you (up the Pinoy in the color, vibrancy, mirth) and warmth that celebrates Christmas. It is, after all, the theme to our All Seasons.

And there how this traditionally wintry celebration becomes a summery affair in the Down Under. Sounds incredible but all we true, and we have the mailbox to prove it.

Grand party marks Turkey's 85th year

THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY'S 85TH anniversary was celebrated in Cebu with a glittering diplomatic reception at the ballroom of Marco Polo Plaza Hotel. Brandishing guests at the doorway were the Ambassador of Turkey and Mr. Adnan Batanga.

With them was Turkey's honorary consul general in Cebu Leonidas L. Benedicto. Standing beside her was elected husband Primetime Speaker of the Philippine representative to Iloilo Frank and Thai cruise to Cebu in early December to spend the holidays here with their family.

There was a brief program emceed by Miss Dipna during which the national anthems of both countries were played and hands were made to the continued good relations between Turkey and the Philippines.

Among the guests were Ambassador of Canada Robert Desjardins and his wife Bernice. They came with Canada's honorary consul in Cebu and his wife Anna, and Consul Louis Frederic Beaudet, the Canadian embassy's second secretary.

They shared a short while as they presence was enhanced more for the six-month sojourn member in Cebu of Canadians and Friends of Canada from all over the Visayas and Mindanao. That year, 400 of them filled the ballroom of the Cebu Grand Convention Center.

The center also houses Grand Majestic, restaurant which specializes in Chinese cuisine. You can imagine the fare that had served on this occasion. Beef wine (bested all night courtesy of Cebu Hilton's Manny Ordoñez, who has a bottled in France with his personal label—Manny-S.

Welcome remarks were delivered by Consul Lee, who introduced a trade mission from Saskatoon, Canada. Ambassador Ozcelik then spoke of a three-day visit here with his wife Beverly, drew the evening's grand prize. Belen Rubio was the lucky winner of a round-trip ticket, Cebu-Manila-Vancouver-Manila-Cebu, courtesy of Philippine Airlines.

Ambassadorial assignments

Host day Ambassador and Mr. Fouzi Benedicto hosted a luncheon for Ambassador and Mr. Benedicto at the Green, Colonial Mayflower, Batangas, consul of Japan in Cebu. This occasion could well have been an advance farewell for him as he is due to complete his tour of duty in Cebu soon. He says he wishes he'd never leave.

Presiding the emperor's birthday reception was Japan's ambassador Makoto Katsura, accompanied by his beautiful wife Yukiko, elegantly dressed in an impressive Western outfit.

Cebu Gov. Lito Osmeña's Garcia gave an eloquent speech in tribute to Emperor Akihito for which she was much applauded and Lilibeth's thanked by Ambassador Katsura. He was just as eloquent in his speech, delivered in perfectly spoken English.

Ambassador and his former also spoke perfect French as they exchanged pleasantries with the honorary consul of France in Cebu, Michel Lhuillier, and Lyon Thevenin, the director of Les Amis de la France French Cultural Institute and Language Center. They were joined by Cebu City acting Mayor Mike Rama.

Getting the nods at the reception was a young couple whose engagement was recently announced along with a wedding date—Aug. 8, 2000. The nuptials will be at Cebu Cathedral and the reception at Cebu International Convention Center, say Christina Cedilla and Duke Fenner.

Christina is the daughter of Cebu's governor, while Duke is the handsome mayor of the municipality of Liloan, north of Cebu City, other Mandaue and Consolacion.

Liloan is famous for its "Binay-i" vinaigrette and other delights made by the Fenner family for over a century. For almost 100 years, too, Liloan's shoreline was host to vacation homes of Cebu's elite. Duke Fenner wants to restore the area. The home of the late Henry and Asa Cebu Lhuillier is now the residence of Belgian ambassador Ludovic de Kerpen.

Furthermore, Liloan has a legendary lighthouse, which is the center point of Cebu's newest high-end subdivision, Amara. A joint project of Ayala Land and the family of Ramon Ong, its resale lots have been sold out for months. We're told another phase is about to open and anticipation has mounted among real-estate circles. This large about a child-may be, as everything is, relative.

JAPANESE Ambassador and Mrs. Makoto Katsura, Cebu Gov. Gwendolyn Garcia, and acting Cebu City Mayor Mike Rama

CANADIAN Ambassador and Mrs. Robert Desjardins drew the utmost of a cup to Canada on PNL.

CEBU CEBU

Jaime Pimentel

PHILIPPINE Ambassador to India Francisco Benedicto, Turkey's Honorary Consul General in Cebu Leonidas Benedicto, Turkey's Ambassador and Mrs. Adnan Batanga

Goings On

New Year's service at Ellinwood Church

Celebrate the joy of the season with heavenly songs and inspiring words at Iglesia Ni Cristo Ellinwood Church, one of Manila's oldest Protestant churches and a historic landmark. On Dec. 31, 9 p.m., the Church will host its New Year's Eve Candlelight Service with contemporary and traditional Tagalog music to be rendered by Cha Perpetuo Dino and Graduates Choir directed by noted Filipino religious composer Emmanuel Buencamino and Pio Rosario, respectively. Rev. Samuel Fernandez will deliver the homily. Ellinwood Bible Church is at 1660 Dr. A. Vasquez St., Malate, Manila. Call 5252884.

Jam concert

Watch the Final Countdown Jam Concert on Dec. 30 at the Open Grounds of the Lagoon Event Grand Hall. The highlights of the event include parade of lovable mascots and fireworks display. Gate fee is P50 and P100. Call 5258825, 5258827, 5258828.

Sasha dance party

Get jiggy at Century Park Hotel's 26-last Lounge on Dec. 31, 8:30 p.m.-2:30 a.m. For only P1,750 per adult and P850 per child (7-12 years old) you can enjoy a buffet dinner, party favors and Pol Rosario, the band's lead singer. For more reservations, call the Sales Department at 5251000.

Shopping discounts

All active Star Cellular subscribers are entitled to a 10-percent shopping discount on all Zen Zest and Smart Gizmo outlets nationwide. Subscribers will receive a text message from Star Cellular which they could present to any of over 150 Zen Zest and Smart Gizmo kiosks all over the country. Promo runs until Jan. 31, 2001.

Welcome 2009 by remembering happy times

AS THE OLD YEAR CLOSES, thank the Lord for the happy times we've spent with family and friends. We should stop griping about the recession that will hit us next year. Filipino visionary Nora Luna Bagon assures us: "Don't worry, God will provide. Mama Mary loves us and she will take care of us".

One happy occasion I wish to remember is the **wedding** of a beautiful couple, Sta. Victoria Tengco and Mark Burgos at the San Isidro de San Antonio last Dec. 14. It was the first wedding I attended where three bishops and 22 priests concelebrated.

Silvino Bishop Rolando Tria Tirona stressed it beautifully when he said: "I am overwhelmed by the awesome expression of love during this wedding. The families and friends of the bride/couple are here to witness the outstanding **sacrament** of new people in love".

Adding to the charm of the wedding was when the couple's little girl Vicci walked down the aisle as the flower girl.

We in the Cofradía de la Inmaculada Concepcion...of which Vicky Tengco is the board treasurer—were overwhelmed, as well.

The parents of the couple were beaming with pride and love for their children. They are Engr. Jose and Carmencita Burgos; and Joselito and Amelita Tengco. Happy as well were Cofradía officers Imelda Camargo, founding chair; Aurora Kiamzon, pres. dent; Danny Isidro, vice chair; and Ado Encarnacion, board member, who were principal sponsors.

The reception was held at Shangri-La Makati. Mark Burgos' classmates, members of the Rondinera, sang; as did actor-singer Ogie Alcasid.

Happy Three Kings

Centro Español de Manila, our keenest rival, has been around since 1863, thus making the club 146 years old. The foundation of the centro was formalized on the 31st of October, 1844, by Governor General Narciso Clavería y Zaldua. It was established as a social, recreational and conversation center for the Spanish community in the Philippines. However, it was not long after when it opened its doors to its local comrades thereby banning closer Spanish-Filipino ties.

Today, Centro Español still celebrates the feast of The Three Kings with the son of members dressing up as Gaspar, Melchor and Balthazar.

PURELY PERSONAL

Josephine Barcenas

Filipino priests in America

Fr. Rino Diaz, director of the Chapel of San Lorenzo Ruiz in New York, wrote that 231 Filipino priests representing their various dioceses in the United States gathered in Orlando, Florida, last Nov. 18-20 in response to an invitation from California Bishop Oscar Solis.

The event led to organize a group of Filipino priests with objectives like forming a support network for programs, consultation and sharing of resources.

Sta. Nilo Academy

The Xavier Sister in Malolos, Southern Luzon was the recipient of the Educational Service Contracting (ESC) Program, a scholarship grant for financially venerable students.

Sister Joellen Ramirez, OSF writes: "Our school is in need of virtual facilities such as audio, visual and speech laboratory facilities, books for references, sports equipment, additional computers, science laboratory facilities and physics room. To help, please call Sister Joellen at 0927-435-6694.

Who is Jesus?

Mariologist Rev. Deming Donoso says that you cannot know Jesus unless you get to know His mother Mary. Those who wish this Deming at hold talks in their parishes may text him at 0905-351-4080 or call 523-4125.

Cofradía de Soledad

The members of the Cofradía de Nuestra Señora de la Soledad de Porta Vaga will visit the San Lorenzo House for the Elderly in Pasay at 4 p.m. today. They will bring with them the pilgrim image of the Virgin. The new officers are Ryan Enriquez, president; Mare Dalusa, VP external; Norma Pella, secretary; Kenneth Ferrer, recorder; Ronald Trapol, treasurer; Cielo Magno, auditor; and Franklin Gaerlan, PRO. Spiritual director is Fr. Virgilio Enrico Mendoza. Fr. Julio Balbastro is spiritual advisor.

Guadalupe pilgrimage

Adam's travel is preparing a pilgrimage to Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico that will leave Manila on Feb. 14, 2009. The trip includes Lima, Peru, where the shrine of St. Martin de Porres and St. Rose de Lima are located.

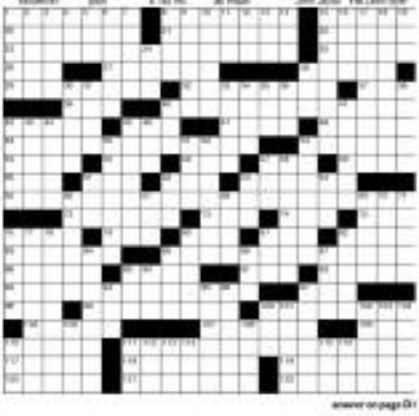
The pilgrims will be brought to Rio de Janeiro where they will find the 222 steps up the Corcovado Mountain where Christ the Redeemer stands. Call 528.3858 or 521-8288 or text 0908-888-2676. I wish join will a Blessed New Year.

HE
We Buy
DIAMONDS

SUNDAY CROSSWORD

PREMIER CROSSWORD! By Frank A. Longo

TIME TO HIT THE HIGH



answer on page D1

Blink—and know the eye drop to use

By Joy Bolin

TO UNDERSTAND how much a discomfort dry eye syndrome is, try standing before a blowing electric fan for several minutes with your eyes wide open. Your eyes will feel dry, gritty, scratchy, and will turn red. You'll experience a burning and itching sensation...and light sensitivity.

Dry eye syndrome is one of two types. Dry eye disease is prevalent among post-menopausal women, as hormonal fluctuations can affect the production of tears. Rheumatoid arthritis also affects the quality and quantity of tear production, as do allergies, certain eye injuries, and side effects of medication.

Situational dry eyes is caused by staring too long at the computer, TV, or an absorbing book.

"When you're so focused on your work or what you're watching or reading, you forget to blink," says Dr. Lois Blair Stang, director of the International Eye Institute at St. Luke's Medical Center. "Blinking is a natural action that keeps the ocular surface healthy and if you don't blink, it causes evaporative tear loss." Staying up late, working too long in an air-conditioned room, or exposing yourself to cigarette smoke are other factors that contribute to situational dry eyes.

Fortunately, dry eye syndrome, Dr. Lois Blair Stang says you should determine what's causing it so the first place. Call center agents, smokers, and other people who

Call center folk should put computer below eye level

working hours at the computer should position their monitor slightly below eye level, so this allows the eyes to be partly covered (thus protected) by the lids.

If you'll be immersed in a computer game, an evening movie or TV show, or a book, for hours take a break every 15 minutes to close your eyes for a minute or two.

Applying eye drops is another effective way of relieving dry eye symptoms. Though Dr. Lois Blair Stang warns that relying too much on solutions can lead to dry eye syndrome as well, as they contain preservatives.

Preservative-free eye lubricants are on the market, but they come in small vials and must be used right away, given their shorter shelf life.

GENTEAL EYE DROPS

Genteal offers soothing relief from uncomfortable symptoms of dry eyes while providing protection via Celvalaya, a breakthrough in preservative technology. In less than 60 seconds upon instillation, Genteal gel is neutralized by the eyes enzymes into water (for extra moisture) and oxygen (a normal nutrient), thus preventing the eyes from damaging effects of conventional preservatives.

Ben Tod, an over-the-counter eye drop solution, contains 2 mg/ml of hypromellose and a special "disappearing" preservative (benzalkonium) that evaporates into thin air seconds upon contact with the surface of the eye. Due to two drops of the solution alleviates the symptoms associated with a condition that could lead to corneal melting and blindness in its advanced and severe stages.

The chief complaint: next to headaches, of call center agents, dry eye syndrome, says the ophthalmologist, "is a significant medical concern. It will unbridled, it could get worse."

Vitamins to slow down 'aging' of your eyes

Dr. Rory King-Go

A DISEASE associated with aging that gradually destroys the macula (part of the eye responsible for sharp, central vision), Age-related Macular Degeneration (AMD) is a consequence of growing older. People in their 60s have been known to experience debilitating symptoms.

But it's also the result of a genetically poor lifestyle. Years of maintaining an unhealthy diet, smoking, exposure to artificial and natural UV rays, and the presence of free radicals all contribute to the stress of the macula, so that they cause blood vessels under the retinal nerve to burst.

This band of blood blocks the central vision, which results in a blurry or blind spot in the middle of a patient's field of vision. The patient's vision improves under bright light, but in time, the blind spot may increase in size. In some cases, a patient may lose a straight line or see a naked or distorted.

AMD is irreversible. It is treated in its advanced stages with laser surgery, photodynamic therapy, and anti-VEGF injections into the eye. However, you can slow down its progression, if not lessen your chances of getting it altogether.

Dr. Rory King-Go, a vitreous and retinal disease specialist and a cataract and refractive surgeon who holds clinics at Medical Plaza Makati and Chinese General Hospital, suggests seeing an ophthalmologist regularly after one reaches age 40. Because AMD doesn't happen overnight, chances of it can be spotted early enough and additional factors if seen soon. Wearing sunglasses or a wide-brim hat reduces the risk of AMD, and so does quitting smoking.

Best defense

Studies also prove that a healthy diet is one's best defense against AMD. While powerful antioxidants (vitamins A, C, E, and zinc) protect the eyes against harmful free radicals, eating foods loaded with the carotenoids lutein and zeaxanthin improves the density of the macular pigment in the center of the retina.

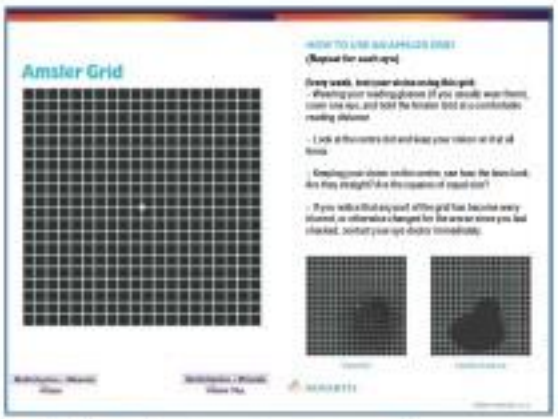
Ironically, consuming foods rich in these nutrients is not as easy as it appears to be. To get the recommended amount of nutrients prescribed by the National Eye Institute's Age-related Eye Disease Study (AREDS), one has to eat 24 oysters to get 80 mg of zinc, 1,400 almonds to have 400 mg of Vitamin E, and a dozen of 57 grams cooked spinach, 3.5 grams of raw carrots, or 40 oranges to get 1 g of lutein!

Thankfully, supplements provide a convenient way to get the adequate amounts of antioxidants and carotenoids needed for optimal eye care, and when it comes to eye vitamins, Dr. Go says, "Ocuvite (multivitamin + minerals) is the closest preparation to [the recommended daily requirements of] the AREDS."

Available over the counter, Vitalux (which contains high dosages of the antioxidants necessary to protect our eyes against early damage) and Ocuvite Plus (multivitamins + minerals designed for individuals over 50, it contains high amounts of antioxidants to reduce the risk and delay the progress of AMD) slow the progression of AMD by 25% and the risk of advanced AMD and its associated vision loss. One to two tablets daily will give your eyes the specific nutrients necessary to delay the onset or progression of AMD.

Aging doesn't have to be a dreaded fact of life. With proper diet, regular exercise and the right supplements, growing old with family and friends is something you can (literally) look forward to.

Joy Bolin



Healthy diet not enough to lower eye-degeneration risk

If one could see it, your macula would appear yellow. That's because the macular pigment contains high levels of carotenoids. (The yellow pigments in many fruits and vegetables. Two major lutein carotenoids, lutein and zeaxanthin, make up the bulk of the macular pigment.

Although zeaxanthin appears to be made in the retina from lutein, the former body doesn't make its own supply of lutein. Thus, our supply of these two carotenoids (multi-colors entirely from what we eat. Research shows that the more we eat foods high in lutein, the higher the density of our macular pigment and vice versa. People with low macular pigment density have been shown to be more prone to developing age-related macular degeneration (AMD), partly because they may have lower levels of antioxidants to protect their macula from free radical damage.

A closer look at AMD

A common feature of age-related macular degeneration (AMD) is the presence of yellow deposits under the retina called "drusen". They are often found in patients over age 60 during routine exam done by an ophthalmologist. Drusen by themselves do not usually cause vision loss, but can increase their size and/or number in contexts a person's risk of developing advanced AMD, which can cause serious vision loss.

The macula is the small "spot" of central vision-related cells in the center of the retina. Over time, drusen cause thinning of the macula that leads to "blank" areas in central vision, a condition known as Dry AMD. The conditions can progress to Wet AMD, which damages new sight by causing new, weak blood vessels to grow and rupture in the back of the eye, causing vision loss.

"Previous research studies suggest that people who eat a diet rich in green, leafy vegetables have a lower risk of developing AMD," said Frederick Ferris, MD, director of clinical research at the US National Eye Institute (NEI) and chairman of Age-Related Eye Disease Study (AREDS). "However, the high levels of nutrients that were evaluated in the AREDS are very difficult to achieve with diet alone."

A nationwide clinical trial conducted by the NEI and completed in 2001, AREDS found that high levels of antioxidants and zinc significantly reduce the risk of advanced AMD and its associated vision loss. The study found that people at high risk of developing advanced stage AMD lowered their risk by about 25 percent when treated with a high dose combination of vitamin C, vitamin E, beta-carotene, and zinc. In the same high-risk group, when smokers people with intermediate AMD or advanced AMD in one eye but not the other eye, the nutrients reduced the risk of vision loss caused by advanced AMD by about 19 percent.

"This is a promising discovery. For people at high risk for developing advanced AMD, these nutrients are the first effective treatment to slow the progression of the disease," said NEI director Dr. Paul A. Sieving. "The nutrients are not a cure for AMD, nor will they restore vision already lost from the disease. But they will play a key role in helping people at high risk for developing advanced AMD keep their vision."

If you're concerned that you are not getting enough lutein in your diet, you may want to consider taking lutein as supplement form. Supplements containing lutein in addition to the AREDS formulation of vitamins and minerals such as Ocuvite (multivitamins + minerals) is now available in most pharmacies and leading drug stores.

TIPS

Prevent dry eyes

1. What are the symptoms of dry eye? I should watch out for?

a. excessive tearing
b. burning and itching
c. heaviness and tired eyes
d. sensitive
e. irritations and redness
f. blurred vision

2. How can I protect myself from having dry eyes?

a. If you are exposed to environmental factors that aggravate dry eyes —overexposure to computers, air-conditioning, sunlight and wind, take a break every 15 minutes to blink and close your eyes for a minute or two. Blinking lets your tear ducts spread evenly around the eye surface.

b. Aging is the primary risk factor of dry eyes. If you are 50 years old and above, your chances of having dry eyes are getting high. So to protect your eyes from eye dryness, maintain a healthy diet by by eating a balanced diet and avoiding smoking. Apply artificial tears 2-4 times a day.

3. How will I choose the artificial tears that is right for me?

An ideal artificial tears is preservative-free, prolonged exposure to eye preservatives may cause eye damage. Preservatives are meant to keep the solution in the bottle free from microbial contamination. However, the eye doesn't need these preservatives.

Recent technology has developed a preservative that keeps the solution free from contamination and also eliminates the dangers of eye damage because it disappears when placed on the eye.

Editor Fermin D. Velarde

ENTERTAINMENT

Quotable quotes from H'wood stars in '08

LOS ANGELES—WE LOOK back on the year about to end with a compilation of quotables spoken from—and about—such Angelina Jolie, Jennifer Aniston, Brad Pitt and other stars.

Angelina Jolie

Angelina, a nominee for Golden Globe Best Actress-Drama for "Changeling," on how she once felt that I've tried to study and learn from. She was the kind of person who loved being a mom. I don't wish for anything other than that. My kids are first. They bring out so much joy and peace. I read how the worst day in the world and you can say horrible things about me, but if I go home and my little kids think I'm great. They love me, and they want to see when they get here. I feel like the most important person in the world."

Brad Pitt

When a journalist asked Brad if he agreed with what Angelina told us in an earlier interview that they're not quite done yet having more kids, he replied with a smile, "We haven't found any names we feel clicked. Guess that, subtle, our jobs, we have the capability to name someone a home, provide a home ... Let me tell you it's selfish, too, because the reward I'm from extraordinary ... so no, we haven't found our reason to stop yet."

How do mom and dad get a minute alone? "Mom and dad are sensitive," Brad said with a grin. Then he said with a laugh, "There are none the needs. There are a few moments in the desert but ... we're good. We have a system."

Jennifer Aniston

On boyfriend-singer John Mayer: "It's so amazing thing to watch a musician think. And it's somewhat that, isn't one. I don't know many musicians, but true instrumental [geeks], where it's no time, it's just a channel. It's something I've never seen. It's an instrument, and somehow and it's music. I decided to watch the way he broke studio and the way he talks. It's beautiful."

Vanessa Hudgens

"Humored" we greeted Vanessa when she walked into a hotel room expecting to see our interview "Melissa," answered the Filipino-American actress.

Zac Efron

"I would love to go see the Philippines," said Zac, the on-and-off-screen boyfriend of Vanessa. "If he always here, one of my goals for the last few is the Philippines over and there. He always wants back with stories of his adventures, so I'd like to experience that. We just haven't been invited yet [laughter], but we'll make it there soon enough, I'm sure."

Of Vanessa, Zac said: "She has grown up, as all of us have. She continues to amaze me with her talents, with every installment of High School Musical. She's moving into a position. It has been great to watch her blossom."

Andrew Stanton

In our latest visit to Pixar Animation Studios in San Francisco, Andrew was asked why the animation studio always succeeds—"Well, E" being the latest proof. He offered several reasons: "One is that everyone in Los Angeles. Everybody who does want to see her different jobs. Nobody else makes movies. You are reminded when you come here every day that it's a privilege to make a movie, a special thing.

"Another is that we're very good at fitting our calendars. Our films look and play had it's need of the time that we're working on them. And it's because we're encouraged as artist to take risks. We know we're not going to double-down on movies unless we have a failure.

Artistic achievement that but a lot of businessmen and executives don't. Fortunately, Pixar is run by artists. It's like you find out sliding off your bicycle because we're very good at picking you up and encouraging you to try again. I don't think we are smarter, to have better ideas, than other people. But we don't get scared. We don't stop a project just because it's not working. We [work] on a problem again and again until it does look."

Meryl Streep

Facing the pool and the dining-meeting begins Sea is a picture-ll is of the Legation Grand Resort in Greece, Meryl was asked if there were something—anything—that she couldn't do. She one's asked me to fly an airplane, thank God," quipped the great actress who sang in last film musical movie, "Mamma Mia! The Movie."

Meryl went all the way to Benny Andersson and Björn Ulvaeus' native Sweden to record "The Winner Takes it All," the musical's grand ballad. She said, "We went to the recording studio where ABBA recorded their song in the '70s. I was standing before the same microphone that Agnetha [Fältskog, the ABBA member who originally sang the ballad] had. I swear to God that on one had changed the clay, inspiring from the '70s—all the old synthesizers—the same piano and all."

Benny Andersson and Björn Ulvaeus

"Every one added dreams, we never thought we'd be sitting here today," admitted Björn as he pondered the continued popularity of ABBA songs long after the five-dish pop quartet's split in 1982. We also spoke to Björn and Benny in London.

Asked about the character of an ABBA member, Benny answered, "None of us wants to do that. We have other things to do." He quipped, to laughter from the appointee "We were under secrets."

Woody Allen

It's a rare interview in LA, set in

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6 DESPERADAS

2008 Metro Manila Film Festival Entries

Quotable quotes from H'wood stars in '08

From page D1

his beloved New York, Woody was unusually candid about directing love scenes (he finds watching them "unromantic," even if time to rehearse her Spanish on-and-off-screen couple Penélope Cruz and Javier Bardem, and Scarlett Johansson in "Vicky Cristina Barcelona").

Woody's comments on directing love scenes came up when he asked to comment on actress Hayley Atwell's amusing primal quotes about doing such scenes in "Cassandra's Dream." The British actress and star, while she and frontman McGregor were at it, Woody was resting a tomato on somebody, spilling some on his shirt and worrying about the wrinkling suits.

Woody said, "When you are in on the screen, it's one thing, but if you are there on the set when we do it, it's very literal and professional. The camera comes in, People hang the lights. There's a crew around. Then we say go and the actors do their thing. Relax thinking, are they going too long? Are they going too slow? Is her hair blocking her face? Is there a shadow of the microphone on something? It's a very unromantic time that I usually use to catch up on my reading. Then when it's finished, someone says, 'Okay, lunch' and everybody goes in different directions."

Jennifer Hudson

Four years after "American Idol" Season 3 runner-up Jennifer Hudson has so far being "star of her league," Jennifer Hudson is still being mined by reporters about that biting reunion that with her first solo album, finally out and selling well, not to mention her Oscar and Golden Globe trophies for her spectacular turn in "Dreamgirls," Jennifer couldn't help but answer with a certain amount of relish.

"There is a lesson in everything," the singer-actress said with a smile. "Sisters did tell me I was out of my league. Maybe for now, right because now I'm in a different league. Maybe I sent me back to the right league. ... Oh well. I'm supposed to be in another league. Now I'm supposed to be in another league."

JENNIFER Hudson

Leonardo DiCaprio

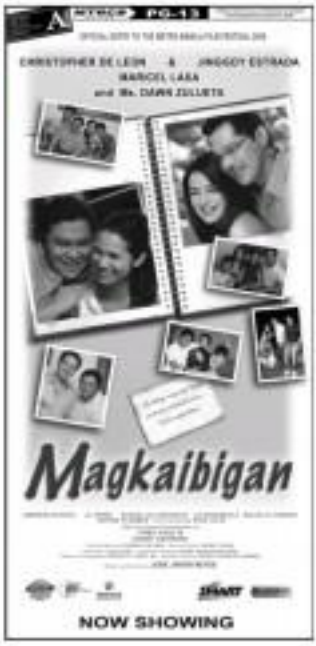
Leonardo is now able to speak about the double-edged sword which the overwhelming success of "Titanic" brought to his life. The IA native opened up about how the sudden fame and attention got too much for him.

He stopped making films for two years, during which he was able to reflect on how he can lead a more meaningful life. "The only subject in school that I was ever interested in were science, biology, the earth and the way it works, nature and the environment." These interests eventually led to his career—environmentalism.

He summed, "I had my own crash course, education-wise, I got to serve Al Gore in the White House while he was vice president. He talked to me about global warming and actually sat me down for an hour and told, 'This is the biggest issue that's going to face humanity ... I started to educate myself in that ... Science was still hedgy at the time because you still had some people saying, does global warming exist? Now we know that over 93 percent of the scientific community believes that it is happening. The other seven percent may argue that it's not actually but you have to question their motivation—who is someone funded?"

Touted his goal to roll for serious on global warming, Leonardo wrote, produced and narrated the acclaimed documentary, "The 11th Hour".

Email the columnist at rmagalit_f2k@yahoo.com and read his blog, "The Hayden Report," on http://blogs.inquirer.net/haydenreport.



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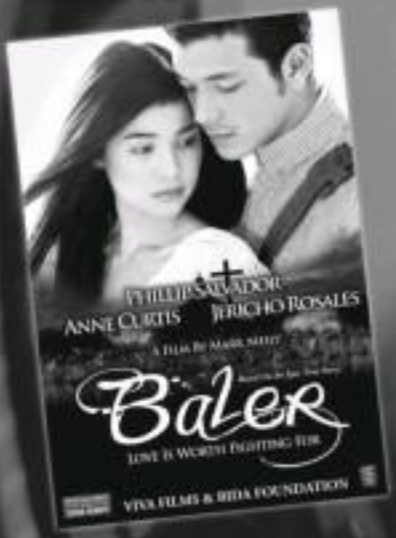

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WISH LIST

TESSIE TOMAS

I HOPE that the movie industry will perk up and become as vibrant and busy as the TV industry. I hope that more quality films will be produced—not just independent, but commercial movies as well, so that there will be more jobs for local actors. One of our biggest problems is that there are too many artists and very few jobs. Competition is fierce and, as a result, artists tend to compromise by compromising their rates.—Jhayzel Sun Biago Jr.

PRECIOUS LARA QUIGAMAN

"I WISH industry people would all get along. It's really hard for actors to concentrate on work because of the ongoing network war."—Maribel Cruz

PAOLO CONTIS

"I WISH for more work for actors, more air-time marooning movies for the stars and technical crews, anytime soon ang comeback ng sipon. I also wish for better payment for the people who make the shows behind the scenes."—Maribel Cruz

CHESCA GARCIA

"MY wish for the entertainment industry is for critics to finally be vindicated—para umangat naman ang industriya. I also wish for more Filipino filmmakers to get international award-giving bodies."—Maribel Cruz

JOSE MANALO

I HOPE the movie industry will thrive again. Marami kasing nawalan ng trabaho—staircrew, dubber, at puti-tauan. I also hope plenty would be scripted. Kung hindi talaga puede siguro yung lumaga pinatrol product na lang ang kilalin. Yung sa artis, sa direktors, pataasin ka.—Maribel Cruz

JON SANTOS

HOW I wish that more local films would enjoy even bigger breaks in the international arena. Maybe a Pinoy Oscar winner in the near future?—Jhayzel Sun Biago Jr.

KUH LEDESMA

I PRAY that more Filipino artists will be able to make it in mainstream America or anywhere else in the world. For that matter, I also hope that we can finally get rid of piracy.—Jhayzel Sun Biago Jr.

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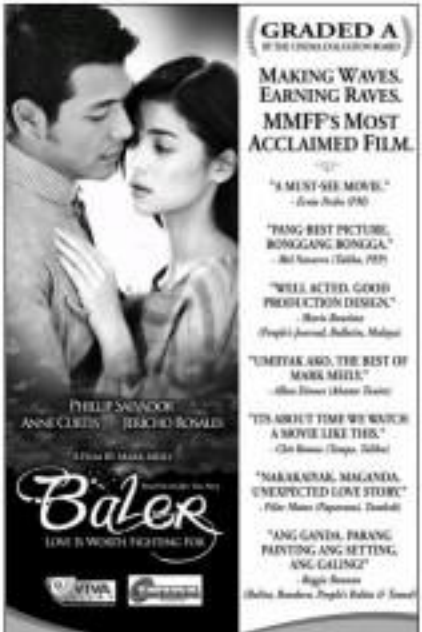

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Osang film's 2nd X

By Raynel Sue Diego Jr.

THE MOVIE AND Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB) gave a second X rating early this week to Rosanna Roces' comeback movie "Sarong," directed by Adolfo Alix Jr.

The independent film got its first X following its initial review by the board, which declared it unfit for public viewing.

Roces plays a serial rapist abducted and molested by members of a "lost community" Old Sorsogon and Bataan Negs.

In an interview, Roces said he cannot that the film's first X rating was "unbelievable," noting that other "horror" movies were "nothing compared to what I did in my old sexy movies."

Kid stuff

Composed in three, she said, "Sarong" was not "filthy" like the board make it difficult for the movie to be shown in theaters. By citing three "X" the board "independent movies being" shown in the country. Johnny they rate is Australia abroad."

Gwen Lucero added that "art will never be given much leeway in a Catholic country like ours."

The personal review committee consisted of Fr. Nicolas Cruz, Mario Hernando, Noel del Prado, Jojo Akpat and Marco Lance.

Board clerk Marcia Lagarrabe said the film's petitioners have the option to refer the matter to Malacañang's appeals committee. Alix said he plans to do that.

'Too explicit'

According to Lagarrabe, the committee reported that the "controversial" scenes had been retained. In the first review, the board had found three scenes "too explicit."

Lance said the "rendering of Rosanna's breast and the pumping scene ... [were] prolonged and gratuitous."

Hernando said he wanted to give the movie an R-16 rating without cuts.

Alix plans to screen the cancer "Sarong" at the Cultural Center of the Philippines on the UP Diliman, Quezon City campus this June.

Rage radio alarming and too vicious

MANY PEOPLE CONTINUE TO LISTEN TO the radio, despite the increasing popularity and influence of television. Some radio workers like the excellent (superior) service in the public sector(s), but other(s) exploitative programs are a clear(er) clear(er). Would that they realize the error of their ways, and resolve to do (exactly better) in 2009!

One shocking unforgettable day, we caught a "panicked jaker" radio show that absolutely terrified its clueless victim, a housemaid, by (a) harassing her that her employer had been arrested by the police. Posing as cops, the radio announcers questioned the poor maid about her employer's behavior. Already, sensed panic(ky) (ness, etc., coming) her that, if she would forthcoming, she may never see her boss again. Hence, she could also be picked up and charged with complicity!

Expectedly, the girl was scared out of her wits—which drove her interrogators into loud and livid paroxysms of glee. We, too, were livid—with rage. What gave these cruel radio people the right to badger innocent (because real) maids (by)point of view?

Yes, the show had a "good intention" format, but the announcers' accusations were all too real to the poor housemaid to the occasion with her wits(n't) there at all!

Another radio program that got our goat recently had a "public service" format, but was similarly reprehensible, because its host used it to vilify his character(s) thus:

At first blush, the show was a comparatively productive, because it upheld the rights of the downtrodden.

In this particular instance, the complainants were service workers who called against their employer's questionable rules and actuations. They felt they weren't paid the correct wage, and that some of the penalties levied against them for real or imagined lapses were quite (c)ostly, to say the least.

Fine—for what started as was the progress host's vile manners in accusing the erring employer of all sorts of (obnoxious) conduct, even beyond the registered workers' complaints.

There, the assessment roughly apportioned (himself at both) accuser and judge, and deemed the employer to legal and unfairly bad boss-accusations-true. Worst of all, he rose out ethnic and racial slurs against the employer who(m) he so summarily determined.

Clearly, the employer was guilty of some infraction—but for him to be so thoroughly besmirched and blindsighted in public was simply too odious, and insulting.

What now, Kuya Reeves!

Female viewers love Kuya Reeves because he's gifted, sensitive and "different." His intense and brooding looks have made him a natural for playing characters set apart from the muddling crowd by their "exotic" backgrounds and temperaments.

In his latest movie, "The Boy Who Just Wouldn't Sell," therefore, Reeves is in his element as he plays a human set alien. Although he's all powerful and has come to earth to exterminate the human race in order to save the planet, Reeves's character is generally devoid of emotion. Here, again, the actor's patented brooding visage makes him allow without vulnerable.

But, after 30 minutes, we got weary of the "disinterest" acting approach, and long to see the alien getting affected by the emotions of the humans he converts with.

Still, he does—but only out of as Reeves chooses to emote a field for most of the movie.

Towards the end, the alien does get indoctrinated by the few human friends he has made, enough for him to call off the massacre of the human race (what a relief!). But, it's too late, because viewers have already given up trying to empathize with him.

Aside from Reeves' stolid performance, the film is weighed down by the predictable(s) decision to cast Kelly Rowe as the top US government official in charge of the crisis brought about by the arrival of the all-powerful alien. Rowe as the US secretary of defense? That (are obviously acting is indefensible!

Other lacking factors: Too much discussion, too little action. Woefully limited human (to-person) contact for other (to-person) exposition, and, thirdly, choice locations.

Too bad, because some of the movie's special effects are visually stunning. But special effects do not an engrossing movie make, so it's back to the drawing boards for the film's makers—as well as to Kuya Reeves, who really needs to get away from his "signature" brooding portrayals, and reassign his (c)ocoy with a (b)rand (n)ew dramatic performance, stat!

What now, Kuya Reeves? What now indeed!

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

Posing as cops, the announcers questioned the poor maid, who was scared out of her wits

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